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# THE ATTITUDE OF JESUS TOWARD WOMAN





# THE ATTITUDE OF JESUS TOWARD WOMAN

BY

M. MADELINE SOUTHARD, M.A.

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TO  
NOLA STEVENSON GRAY  
Friend and Counselor  
Of My  
Girlhood and Womanhood



## PREFACE

The following pages were written originally as a Master's thesis at Northwestern University in the spring of 1919. When it was decided to rewrite in part with a view to publication the first thought was to eliminate most of the quotations that had made a necessary part of the thesis. But on further consideration it seemed that in presenting a somewhat unusual position it might be reassuring to the reader to have the concurrence on various points of men of recognized scholarship.

The quotations from the Sacred Books of the East are from the translations grouped under that name and edited by Max Müller. Quotations from Hebrew and Christian Scriptures are from the King James version.

One matter the writer would like to have kept in mind by all readers. The many fine, clean, considerate men of to-day are no more responsible for the brutalities of their sex in the past than the many intelligent, capable women of to-day are responsible for the stupidities of their sex in the past. Historic facts have to be faced but there is no occasion for recrimination. Only as men and women seek truth together and together build for a complete humanity can either sex come to fullness of life. It is with the hope that these words may help somewhat, if ever so little, in finding that truth that makes both men and women free, that they are sent out into the surging currents and cross-currents of thought that shape our Twentieth Century.

M. M. S.





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## CHAPTER I

### THE HISTORIC ATTITUDE AND THE ATTITUDE OF JESUS TOWARD WOMAN

#### RECENT CHANGES IN STATUS OF WOMAN

TO-DAY the principle of democracy is leavening the whole world. It is producing tremendous changes in political, industrial and racial relationships. One of its most momentous manifestations is the attempt being made to overthrow those special privileges founded on sex-differentiation that have created and maintained a sex-autocracy through the centuries. Vast changes have already been made, particularly in America and parts of Europe. In the nineteenth century the opportunity for higher education for women was finally won and for more than a half-century these countries have had a considerable number of women thus trained. As a natural result of this many legal disabilities have been removed from women, industrial inequalities have been lessened, political suffrage has been granted, professions once reserved entirely for men have been opened to them, and ecclesiastical rights are being granted.

All these changes in the status of woman have originated in lands that were nominally Christian and where the mass of the people, particularly the leaders, have had a working acquaintance with the Christian Scriptures. Every change that has come in woman's position has been the subject of prolonged and violent contro-

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versy, and the Christian Scriptures have had a large place in that controversy. In every movement, whether for higher education, the franchise, economic opportunity, or the right to public expression of religious convictions, the opponents have based much of their opposition on certain interpretations of the Scriptures of the Christian Church. So common has this been that a number of ardent advocates of equal opportunity for women have openly accused the customs and Scriptures of the Christian Church of being the chief obstacle to woman's complete emancipation.

In this treatise the purpose is to go back of the mass of ecclesiastical usage and tradition that has grown up through nineteen centuries, back of the early paganizing of the Church when State and Church were united, back even of the practical advice of the first great missionaries<sup>1</sup> who labored to keep the mighty dynamic of spiritual freedom from rending asunder all social relationships in an age when those relationships were unspeakably unjust and corrupt,—back of all these to find what was the attitude toward woman of the Founder of Christianity Himself.

### WOMAN, CREATURE OF RELATIONSHIPS OR PERSON WITH RELATIONSHIPS?

Human beings have the same biological processes as other animals. That which distinguishes them from other animals is personality. Jesus sought to enlarge personality and make it dominant over animal instincts. Economic and domestic demands were not to be ignored, they were to be subordinated and made to contribute to the ideal. Self-preservation "the first law

<sup>1</sup> To kings and subjects, masters and slaves, men and women.

of nature," and the instinct of reproduction its close second, were to yield their place of primacy. To seek first the Kingdom of God and let all these things be added was fundamental in His teaching.

Keeping this general attitude of Jesus in mind, we look to see His attitude toward woman. As the female of the species woman has certain relationships associated with the biological function of reproduction. Is she then a creature of these relationships, or is she a person with these relationships? Upon the answer to that question depends the status of woman in any given civilization or system.

Whether one read Homer or the Vedas, or study the traces of matriarchy (in the narrower sense of mother-right) to be found in so many languages, all point to a time of considerable more liberty for women. But any one conversant with world conditions knows that in historic times woman has been considered the creature of her sex-relationships and of the resultant blood-relationships. That is, her position and privileges have been determined by her being the wife, mother, daughter, concubine or mistress of some man. For long centuries women were obtained for marriage by capture or by purchase <sup>2</sup> and were the property first of their fathers and then of their husbands. By being the mother of a son a woman might rise to a place of considerable authority, while a favorite wife might secure many privileges. But as a person in herself, apart from her relation to the male, woman was not thought of. Even when she was devoted to religious service it was to become a temple-harlot.<sup>3</sup> <sup>4</sup> At Corinth there were a

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>3</sup> The Vestal Virgins were an exception to this; they were buried alive if they forfeited their chastity. But only a half-dozen of these were kept at a time.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix B.

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thousand of these at one time, who got gain for the Temple of Aphrodite.

Books could be written, as indeed books have been written, making clear how universally woman has been considered a creature of her relationships. A very few quotations must suffice:

"So far at any rate as our authorities enable us to judge, woman in the historic age was conceived to be so inferior to man that he recognized in her no other end than to minister to his pleasure or to become the mother of his children. Romance and the higher companionship of intellect and spirit do not appear (with certain notable exceptions) to have been commonly sought or found in their relations." It could hardly be otherwise than that in all times some women of remarkable personality and some men of unusually fine nature would make "notable exceptions" to this rule. But the prevalence of war, lack of education of women, very early marriage and almost complete separation of the sexes except for propagation, made these exceptions pitifully rare. The same writer says: "Woman in fact was regarded as a means to an end, and was treated in a manner consonant with this view."<sup>5</sup>

In keeping with this is the well-known saying of Demosthenes concerning Greek men: "Mistresses we keep for pleasure, concubines for daily attendance upon our person, wives to bear us legitimate children and to be our faithful housekeepers."

While the Roman matron had much more honor than the Greek wife, the *potestas* of the Roman father was absolute, extended to the power of life and death, and this power he passed on to the husband when he turned over to him possession of his daughter. She was held

<sup>5</sup> G. Lowe Dickinson, *The Greek View of Life*, pp. 159, 160.

*in manu* by her husband; legally she was in the position of a daughter to him. For a few generations a small number of the most wealthy and favored classes managed, by a clever technical trick, to evade this tutelage and secure for themselves a considerable degree of liberty in the decadent days of the Empire. The extent of this liberty of Roman women has, however, been greatly overestimated. It has been thought that they exercised the same rights as men since they did divorce their husbands and some indulged in loose living. But wives were never permitted the unchecked profligacy of their husbands. Laws passed in 18 B.C. required that the husband denounce his wife, the father his daughter, if she was found guilty of violating her marriage vow, and if these failed any citizen was required to inform on her. That this law was not a dead letter is shown by the fact that Augustus Cæsar was forced to exile his daughter Julia for adultery, and the Younger Julia had the same fate, as did some prominent men who were not careful what women they chose for their amours. Of course no law interfered with the man on this line except that he must not infringe upon the rights of other men. No political rights were granted Roman women. When they tried to use the right of petition, or perhaps we should say lobbying, the Elder Cato thundered against their audacity.

The Hindu law is very definite: "By a girl, by a young woman, or even by an aged one, nothing must be done independently, even in her own house. In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent."<sup>6</sup> Almost identical are the laws of China, edited by Confucius: "In pass-

<sup>6</sup> *The Code of Manu*, V, 147, 148.



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ing from the great gate (of her father's house) he precedes her, and she follows, and with this the right relation between husband and wife commences. The woman follows (and obeys) the man; in her youth she follows her father and elder brother; when married she follows her husband; when her husband is dead she follows her son." <sup>7</sup>

Civilized or savage it was much the same: "One of the most baffling of West African problems is the problem of the women. There is no place for them outside the harem; they have no proper status in the community, being simply the creatures of man, his laborer, his drudge. A girl-child if not betrothed by her guardian lacks the protection of law. She can, if not attached to some man, be insulted or injured with impunity." <sup>8</sup>

In Europe before the Christian Era matters were not greatly different. Tacitus indeed is loud in praise of the Teutons, his aim being to shame immoral Rome. Doubtless it was better in the barbarous tribes than in the effete civilizations of Southern Europe. There was little polygamy, only a very few had plural wives. Women were still put to death for any sin against chastity, and this seemed most admirable to Tacitus, as did the fact that widows sometimes committed suicide on the husband's grave. We have no one to tell us just how it seemed to the women. They had no political rights, the reason given being, as everywhere, that they could not bear arms.

Everywhere a woman was looked upon as a child-bearing instrument. "Future abundance and male offspring were aimed at when the bride, after being conducted to her husband's home, was placed on a red bull

<sup>7</sup> *The Li Ki*, Book 9, Sect. 3:10.

<sup>8</sup> W. P. Livingstone, *Mary Slessor of Calabar*, p. 226.

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hide and took upon her lap the son of a woman who had borne only living male children," writes A. A. MacDonald of the ancient family rites in India.<sup>9</sup> So in China: "In presenting a daughter for [the harem of] the Son of Heaven it is said: 'This is to complete the providers of sons for you.'"<sup>10</sup> Of the Angola people Livingstone writes: "The height of good fortune is to bear sons. The women will leave their husbands altogether if they bear daughters only, and many childless women commit suicide."<sup>11</sup> Often the wife has not the chance of leaving, but is put away or superseded by another wife if she bears only daughters, while female infanticide has been common in many lands. "The purely physical significance of woman in relation to the state found doubtless its strongest and most logical expression in Sparta, where wives were taken simply [Greek: for the work of child-bearing: Plutarch] and their interchange for that object was both permitted and encouraged."<sup>12</sup> Among the Hebrews it was somewhat better: "There was none of the contempt for girls which has always marked many eastern races. Female infanticide, which was practiced among the Arabs, was apparently unknown to the Hebrews. The *patria potestas* was, however, almost absolute." "The honor paid to a wife was dependent upon her bearing a son. . . . The first desire of the parents was for sons. But daughters were also welcomed."<sup>13</sup> "Women were looked upon rather as potential mothers, destined to give the tribe the most priceless of all gifts, namely

<sup>9</sup> *Hastings' Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. XII, p. 614.

<sup>10</sup> *Li Ki*, Book I, Sect. II, Pt. III.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted by O. T. Mason, *Woman's Share in Primitive Culture*, p. 207.

<sup>12</sup> W. J. Woodhouse, *Hastings' Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. V, p. 444.

<sup>13</sup> James Straham, *Hastings' Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. V, p. 725.

sons." "Barrenness was a dire misfortune, nay, a divine judgment; for it was not until she had become mother of a son that the wife attained her full dignity in the household."<sup>14</sup> The woman "attained special importance and dignity when after the death of her husband her son became the head of the family. She was the most important and influential woman in the household, he had been trained in deference and obedience to his mother; his wives were his property and absolutely subject to his authority."<sup>15</sup>

It seems unnecessary to multiply instances to show that everywhere, while the man was considered a person in himself, the woman was considered the creature of her relationships. She might come into high honor if her son became famous. When she married she was automatically lifted or lowered to her husband's rank. According to the Code of Manu, "Whatever be the qualities of the man with whom a woman is united according to the law, such qualities even she assumes like a river united with the ocean. . . . These and other females of low birth have attained eminence in the world by the respective good qualities of their husbands."<sup>16</sup> As in India so in China: "Hence, while the wife had (herself) no rank, she was held to be of the same rank as her husband, and she took her position according to the rank belonging to him."<sup>17</sup>

"All around the world woman is the depressed sex."<sup>18</sup> A careful study would indicate two main sources of that depression: First, War; everywhere the woman was relegated to an inferior position and denied

<sup>14</sup> I. Benzimer, *Encyclopedia Biblica*, Vol. II, pp. 1500, 1502.

<sup>15</sup> W. H. Bennett, *Hastings' Bible Dictionary*, Vol. I, p. 847.

<sup>16</sup> *Code of Manu*, IX, 22, 24.

<sup>17</sup> *Li Ki*, Bk. IX, Sect. III: 11.

<sup>18</sup> D. J. Fleming, *Building With India*, p. 61.

citizenship because she could not bear arms; Second, Religion; the ethnic religious cults have been very largely built up around ancestor worship which has required a son to offer sacrifices for the peace of the dead. A woman's religion changed with her masculine owners, she accepted her husband's gods when she married him, and the all essential thing was that she bear a son to perform the necessary funeral rites for his father and perpetuate his stock so that there would never be lacking a son to make these offerings.

Usually no such thing as a personal religion is permitted to the woman. In India no sacrifice, no penance, no fasting, is allowed to women apart from their husbands; to pay obedience to her lord is the only means for a woman to gain bliss in heaven, for he is as a god to her. By violating her duty to her husband a wife is disgraced in this world and after death she enters into the womb of a jackal (for reincarnation) and is tormented with diseases for the punishment of her sins. No sacred texts may be repeated for a woman. This for Hindu law.<sup>19</sup>

But even Hebrew law said: "If a man vow a vow unto the Lord . . . he shall not break his word . . . If a woman vow a vow unto the Lord, being in her father's house in her youth, and her father hear her vow and her bond . . . and her father shall hold his peace at her . . . her vows shall stand. But if her father disallow her in the day that he heareth, not any of her vows shall stand. . . . And if she have an husband . . ." (same as in case of father) [Numbers 30: 2-8.] The widow was mistress of her own soul, but the woman under the power of a father or husband was not.

<sup>19</sup> *The Code of Manu*, V, 155, 164, 166. IX:18.

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The Earl of Cromer has this to say of Egypt: "In Christian Europe the religious faith of women is generally stronger than that of men. . . . The faith of Moslem women, on the other hand, is probably less strong than that of Moslem men. Neither need this be a matter of surprise. It is a consequence of the fundamental differences which separate Christianity from Islamism. Although it is an error to teach that Mohammed's general plan did not involve a future life for women, there can be no doubt that not only did he, by precept and example, relegate women to a position in this world inferior to that of men, but also that the religion which he founded is eminently one conceived by man and intended for men."<sup>20</sup> When one thinks how generously Islam allows each man four wives and all his female slaves and promises a hereafter filled with most beautiful virgins waiting for the coming of the Faithful,<sup>21</sup> one is convinced that the Earl of Cromer is right, it is a man-conceived religion, in which, even in heaven, a woman remains a creature of her relationship to man.

The article on Woman in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* begins thus: "The very word woman (O. Eng. wifmann) etymologically meaning a wife . . . sums up a long history of dependence and subordination from which the women of to-day have only gradually emancipated themselves in such parts of the world as come under 'Western civilization.'"<sup>22</sup> Now it is of interest to note that "Western civilization" is found in just those countries that have nominally, even though not actually, accepted Christianity, and is most pronounced in those lands where the Christian Scriptures are most

<sup>20</sup> *Modern Egypt*, Vol. II, p. 541.

<sup>21</sup> Appendix C.

<sup>22</sup> Vol. XXVIII, p. 782, Eleventh Edition.



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widely read and taught; also that in all lands the position of woman is greatly changed for the better as soon as she becomes a member of a Christian community; and that in every land the most flagrant injustices to women, such as female infanticide, the burning of widows, and the like, are done away as soon as the leaven of the Scriptures begins to work in the midst. Judging by these effects Christianity would seem to be favorable to woman's emancipation from the servitude thrust upon her because of her sex, in spite of the use many have made of certain apostolic writings to retard that emancipation.

The women of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who have been striving to do away with differences of opportunity based upon sex have had no desire to repudiate the relationships that are normally theirs because of their sex. Their protest has been against being considered as primarily creatures of these relationships. They would be first persons, then wives and mothers, as men are first persons, then husbands and fathers. And if their sisters have sinned in their relationships they would have them treated as human beings still, even as are their brothers guilty of the same sin. It is the purpose of this treatise to show that, in spite of the obscurantism and misinterpretation of which the Church has been guilty, this was exactly the attitude toward woman of the Founder of Christianity Himself. And the more fully acquainted the reader is with the attitude toward woman of the various peoples and their great teachers, the more that reader will recognize how unique is the attitude of Jesus toward her.

## CHAPTER II

### HIS RECOGNITION OF WOMAN'S INTELLECTUAL AND SPIRITUAL CAPACITY

WE have stated our purpose to show that Jesus treated women not as creatures of their relationships but as persons in themselves. He must then have regarded them as capable of full intellectual and spiritual apprehension. As evidence that he did so regard them we will consider two conversations in which Jesus addressed to women some of His most profound utterances.

The first recorded conversation of Jesus with any woman except His mother is that with the Samaritan at the well. Adeney says: "There is no story in the Bible that speaks for its own veracity by every feature of it more certainly than St. John's account of the woman of Samaria. If this is not history we have no history in the New Testament."<sup>1</sup> Even the unbelieving Renan says: "But the narrative of this chapter certainly represents one of the inmost thoughts of Jesus and most of the circumstances have a strong stamp of truth."<sup>2</sup> Those who question the Johannine authorship of the Fourth Gospel will doubtless agree that there would hardly be among the early converts to Christianity a writer so much more liberal than Jesus Himself as to represent Him as holding conversations of such import with women unless it was well understood that it was

<sup>1</sup> Walter F. Adeney, *Woman of the New Testament*, p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> Ernest Renan, *Life of Jesus*, p. 250.



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His custom so to address them. The narrative speaks for itself:

Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For His disciples were gone away into the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto Him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto Him, Thou hast nothing to draw with and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou this living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children and his cattle?

Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again. But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband and come hither. The woman saith unto Him, I have no husband. Jesus saith unto her, Thou hast well

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said, I have no husband; for thou hast had five husbands and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband; in that thou saidst truly.

The woman saith unto Him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

The woman saith unto Him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when He is come He will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am He. And upon this His disciples came and marvelled that He talked with the woman; yet no man said, What seekest thou? or Why talkest thou with her?

The woman then left her waterpot and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man that told me all the things that ever I did; is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city and came unto Him.

In the meanwhile His disciples prayed Him saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore saith the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought Him to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My

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meat is to do the will of Him that sent me and to finish His work. Say not ye, There are yet four months and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest. . . .

And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman which testified, He told me all that I ever did. So when the Samaritans were come to Him they besought Him that He would tarry with them and He abode there two days. And many more believed because of His own word, and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard Him ourselves and we know that He is indeed the Christ the Saviour of the world. [John 4: 6-42.]

### WHY DID THEY MARVEL?

We note the surprise caused by Jesus' speaking to the woman. First she is surprised and asks Him why He addresses her, a woman of Samaria. The fact that the Jews did not have dealings with the Samaritans would account for that in part. But when the disciples came and saw Him talking with her they "marvelled that He talked with the woman." Why did they marvel? To those brought up in lands touched by the ideals of Christianity it seems perfectly natural to find a religious leader thus teaching a woman. But not so in those times. Bishop Lightfoot says: "To us the large place which women occupy in the Gospels and early Apostolic history seems only natural. To contemporaries it must have appeared in the light of a social revolution."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Lightfoot, *Sermons on Special Occasions*, p. 224.

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Many things indicate that in earlier centuries Hebrew women had enjoyed a considerable degree of freedom. Dr. Ismar J. Peritz indeed asserts that they had part in the priesthood in the earlier days of Israel.<sup>4</sup> But that time had passed. All authorities agree that according to the customs of their day the disciples had great reason to be astonished when they saw their Master conversing with a woman. "A rabbinical prejudice prevailed to the effect that woman is not capable of profound religious instruction. Probably the disciples had not yet seen their Master set Himself above that prejudice."<sup>5</sup> David Smith says that the disciples "stood aghast" for "they were marvelling that He was talking with a woman. And well they might marvel. It was wonder enough to find their Master in close and earnest conversation with a Samaritan, but it was still greater wonder that He should talk with a woman. Among the Jews women were lightly esteemed."<sup>6</sup>

These and other authorities refer to the teaching of the Jewish rabbis, "The Torah in its entirety is for the man, whereas woman is exempt from those positive precepts which are to be fulfilled at stated times. She is not to learn—much less to teach—not being included in such passages as Deut. 11:19 'And you shall teach them to your sons.' How then may a woman make out her title to salvation? Her work is to send her children to the synagogue; to attend to domestic concerns and to leave her husband free to study in the schools; to keep house for him until he returns. Women, slaves and children are mentioned together. Another remarkable grouping is found in the Jews' morning prayer, where

<sup>4</sup> *Woman in the Ancient Hebrew Cult*, in "Journal of Biblical Literature" (1898, Part II).

<sup>5</sup> Frederic Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, Vol. II, p. 120.

<sup>6</sup> David Smith, *In the Days of His Flesh*, p. 77.

the men in three consecutive benedictions thanked God 'who hath not made me a Gentile—a slave—a woman.'"<sup>7</sup> A common rabbinical teaching was "Better burn the Law than teach it to a woman."

With this background we study the conversation that so astonished the disciples. Beginning with the simple matter of drawing water from the well, Jesus passes quickly to the heart of spiritual mystery. He has to contend with the woman's surprise at His ignoring of conventions, her ancestral pride, patriotic and religious prejudice, yet, weary as He is, He uses consummate skill to lead this wary but restless and needy soul to genuine faith.

Godet says the expression, "Woman, believe me," signifies, "Perform an act of faith to apprehend what I am going to tell thee," and that He makes an energetic appeal to her will.<sup>8</sup> Apparently Jesus recognized in this woman a person of strong mental and volitional powers. Her ability to gather at once a congregation that He considered worth two days of His time indicates that this conclusion was correct.

#### REVEALS TWO PROFOUND TRUTHS

Two most profound statements on two of the most profound subjects the human mind is capable of considering were made by that roadside well to this audience of a single woman. In the figurative language so common to all Oriental peoples Jesus passes from the matter of physical thirst to a discussion of spiritual thirst. "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never have thirst, but the water that I shall

<sup>7</sup> Charles Taylor, *Sayings of the Jewish Fathers*, p. 138.

<sup>8</sup> Godet, *John*, Vol. II, p. 113.



## THE ATTITUDE OF JESUS TOWARD WOMAN

give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life," is the surpassing description of the mystical experience of the life of God in the human soul.

The other statement concerns the being of God. The woman has been taught that their own sacred mountain is the proper place to worship, but she knows the Jews declare that Jerusalem is the only true sanctuary. What does this Prophet say? In answer He leads her to contemplate a God unconditioned by place, free from the remotest touch of anthropomorphism. "The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem but in the spirit." So Jesus gives to this woman the most metaphysical definition of God as well as of the soul's approach to God.

This would seem to be enough to reveal to any one person, but this woman has marvelous receptive capacity. There is one thing more she must know, and that is who this stranger is. The Samaritan idea of the Messiah, while incomplete, was free from the false associations it had among the Jews. Therefore it was safe for Jesus to reveal Himself here as it was not in Judea, and this He now does. "The first full clear announcement by Himself of His own Messiahship was made by a well side in the weary noon to a single obscure Samaritan woman. And to this poor sinful stranger had been uttered words of immortal significance to which all future ages would listen as it were with hushed breath and on their knees."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Frederic W. Farrar, *Life of Christ*, Vol. I, p. 213.

## HIS RECOGNITION OF WOMAN'S CAPACITY

### HIS REVELATION TO MARTHA

There is one character in the New Testament that has been unfairly dealt with through the centuries. Her name has been associated with an undeveloped stage in her experience, while the great honor paid her later has usually been overlooked. This is Martha of Bethany. That Martha was a good cook and fond of serving her friends there can be no doubt. That she must needs therefore have a turn of mind averse to deeply intellectual and mystical truth is an unwarranted conclusion. The conversation at her brother's grave shows that Jesus considered Martha capable of the highest spiritual illumination:

Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died. But I know that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee.

Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha said unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus saith unto her, I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me though he were dead yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. Believest thou this? She said unto Him, Yea, Lord, I believe Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, who should come into the world. [John 11: 21-27.]

Students of this Scripture note the care Jesus used to prepare the mind of Martha for the great miracle so that it might have the greatest possible value for her own religious life. Martha is commonly thought of as



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having her chief interest in the kitchen because her service was there. But to her Jesus spoke words of transcendent value, revealing the inner and personal meaning of the great resurrection hope. One has said of this conversation: "What sublimity and what comfort in this testimony of Christ concerning Himself. Who can measure the effect which it produces from day to day in countless chambers of mourning and before open graves all over the Christian world."<sup>10</sup>

These conversations show Jesus' belief in the ability of women to comprehend the deep truths of life and of theological thought. They also show that He felt it so desirable that they should comprehend these truths that He put forth much effort to lead them to this understanding.

### HIS RECOGNITION OF WOMAN'S FAITH

In this study of Jesus' belief in woman's mental and spiritual capacity it is important to know upon what faculty of the soul He placed chief emphasis and then see if that be found in woman. In reading the records we cannot but agree with Bruce that "Faith was in reality the first and chief condition of admission to the kingdom in the teaching of Jesus. Faith was a great word with Him."<sup>11</sup> He used it as including but transcending intellectual assent. Faith or belief required the outgoing of the whole personality to comprehend and appropriate unseen realities. Everything depended upon its possession: "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth; according to your faith be it unto you; if ye have faith as a

<sup>10</sup> John P. Lange, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 251. Edited by Philip Schaff.

<sup>11</sup> Alexander Bruce, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 12.

## HIS RECOGNITION OF WOMAN'S CAPACITY

grain of mustard seed . . . nothing shall be impossible to you; have faith in God; thy faith hath saved thee; thy faith hath made thee whole." "He that believeth" should have eternal life, should not abide in darkness, should do mighty works, should see the glory of God.

He pled with them: "Be not faithless but believing." Everywhere He sought this receptivity of mind but it was woefully lacking. "O ye of little faith," was His frequent lament. He found a "faithless and perverse generation," and His delight was correspondingly great when He found a believing soul. So it is of interest to note that according to the records Jesus mentioned exactly the same number of women as of men who had this essential quality. There were three men, a Roman centurion, a Samaritan leper, and a blind beggar, of whose faith He spoke. There were also three women.

There was the woman who touched His garment in the crowd, to whom Jesus said, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." (Mark 5: 24-34.) It has seemed strange that He would draw her out into the open, but "Christ's purpose in detecting her was to perfect her faith by confession."<sup>12</sup> A great throng was pressing upon Him, He was journeying at the urgent call of a prominent man, but he interrupted everything else to give time to the case in order to purify and lift to a spiritual plane what He recognized as unusual faith in this woman.

The next instance is not one of physical healing, the disease was of the soul. (Luke 7: 36-50.) The woman was a sinner, apparently a common public woman of the streets. All recognize that Jesus' words, "Thy faith

<sup>12</sup> Henry B. Swete, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, p. 100.

hath saved thee," indicate that a complete moral and spiritual renewing had taken place within her. It is hard to realize how great must have been the faith of such a woman in that day to be able to believe for complete rehabilitation of character and life.

The third case is that of a Gentile, the Syro-phœnician woman. Very extraordinary faith was required on her part because of the severity of the tests to which she was subjected. As an alien she approached one of another racial group than her own, a group that prided itself on its exclusiveness. The disciples were annoyed by her request and did not hesitate to show it. The Master maintained what seemed an indifferent silence, and finally rebuffed her, but nothing could turn her aside. "The faith of this heathen Canaanite like that of the heathen centurion excites Christ's admiration. Both of them believed that Jesus was able to heal at a distance, and both trusted His compassion to do so. But the woman's trust was more sorely tried and she had not the advantage of living among Jews and of being under the influence of the Jews' religion."<sup>13</sup> And Bruce thinks that even more than in the case of the centurion Jesus here recognizes a faith surpassing anything in Israel, "A faith remarkable not only for its brightness and strength but for its spiritual enlightenment and width of horizon."<sup>14</sup>

Jesus considered faith the prerequisite for the revelation of Himself, of God, and of the kingdom. In six cases where He specially commended faith in individuals three were women, and by general agreement the one preëminent among the six was a heathen woman.

<sup>13</sup> Alfred Plummer, *Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, p. 217.

<sup>14</sup> *The Kingdom of God*, p. 106.

Humanity is "incurably religious." Scoff at it as the skeptic may, the human race will ever be governed very largely by its religious beliefs, its thought concerning the life after death, the demands and commands of Deity. Therefore nothing can be more pernicious for a people than false religious beliefs. Certainly nothing, outside of war, has done more to degrade woman than the fact that the ethnic cults have universally considered her to be far inferior to man, incapable of understanding the highest mysteries of the religious life.

Buddha overstepped in considerable measure the common prejudice as to woman's limitations in religious matters. Holding out hope as he did to the most abject of creatures, he could not well refuse it to woman. Some of them came to great enlightenment according to the records. To a mother lamenting over her dead baby he revealed the impermanence of all things and so brought her quiet. We would not detract in the least from this; it shows a great and kindly spirit. But Gautama Buddha was held in the terrible bondage of belief in continuous reincarnations, and according to that belief women were born on a very much lower plane than men. It seemed to surprise the Buddha that they responded as they did to his teachings. It will not be out of order to give his conversation with the beautiful Lady Amra. First, when he saw her coming, he prepared his disciples with these words:

"A woman is anxious to exhibit her form . . . whether walking, standing, sitting or sleeping. Even when represented as a picture she desires most of all to set off the blandishments of her beauty, and thus to rob men of their steadfast heart. How then ought ye to guard yourselves . . . from toils designed to entrap you."

But when the lady came she was seen to be modest and earnest, so he said to her, "Young in years and rich, you seem well-talented as you are beautiful. That one so gifted should by faith be able to receive the law of righteousness is indeed a rare thing in the world! The wisdom of a master (Note says, "that is of a man") derived from former births enables him to accept the law with joy; that is not rare; but that a woman, weak of will, scant in wisdom, deeply immersed in love, should yet be able to delight in piety, that indeed is very rare. A man born in the world, by proper thought comes to delight in goodness . . . self-reliant, there is strength and joy. But in the case of woman, from another comes the labor, and the nurture of another's child.<sup>15</sup> Thus then should every one consider well and loathe and put away the form of woman."

"Amra, hearing the law, rejoiced. Her wisdom strengthened and, still more enlightened, she was able to cast off desire, and of herself dissatisfied with woman's form was freed from polluting thoughts."<sup>16</sup>

And this is superior to the usual thing found concerning woman and religion. Only by denying her own womanhood could Amra rise to spiritual heights.

If woman was ever to come to equality on any line she must first be considered equal with man before God or whatever supreme force was believed to control the universe, as that makes the fundamental basis of thought for any people. And this is what Jesus did. He put no difference in His teaching between male and female. It was no occasion of surprise to Him that woman could grasp His highest truths. He presented

<sup>15</sup> All the ancients believed that the seed was entirely of the male and so the child was wholly the property of its father. See Appendix D.

<sup>16</sup> From Fo-Sho-Hing-Tsan-King: Kionen IV, Vargo 22.

them as simply and naturally to women as He did to men, expecting the same response.

In those lands where Christianity is the prevailing religion, sentiment has long considered woman as pre-eminently religious by nature. But even these lands long held the belief that woman is not capable of a mental appraisal of the spiritual life in which she was supposed to excel. The pagan belief in woman's essential intellectual inferiority carried over into the Christian Church. Colleges were not open to her until the nineteenth century. And, curiously, the realm of study that has been longest denied her is theology. A few years ago conservative Oxford opened to women for degrees all its courses *except theology*. While in America as late as 1925 theological degrees were denied by some schools to women who had completed the entire work with high honors.



## CHAPTER III

### HIS DEFENSE OF WOMEN

#### MARY OF BETHANY

NO study of Jesus' appreciation of the mental and spiritual capacity of woman would be complete that did not include Mary of Bethany. The consideration of her case has been reserved, however, for this chapter because two out of the three times that she appears in the Gospels it is to meet with criticism, and both times Jesus defends her against her critics.

In the love of contrasting the sisters, Mary and Martha, both have been done a grave injustice by many writers and speakers. Doubtless Martha was of an active temperament while Mary was the reflective type, but Martha had plenty of idealism when developed, while Mary had some measure of common sense. Luke gives the first introduction to them:

Now it came to pass, as they went, that He entered into a certain village, and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him and said, Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me.

And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha,



Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things. But one thing is needful. And Mary hath chosen that good part that shall not be taken away from her. [Lu. 10: 38-42.]

In the narrative Mary brings down on her head the indignant criticism of her sister. What is her fault? She has left the preparation of a very necessary dinner and gone to listen to discussion that Martha thinks it quite unnecessary for a woman to hear. Now this could easily be a very culpable neglect. That it was not we must infer from Jesus' emphatic espousal of Mary's cause and His rebuke of Martha's state of mind through her "much serving." He knew the situation and He would hardly commend an indolent shirk even as a devotee.

Mary was not sitting in a dazed, spell-bound condition as she has been too often pictured. Without doubt Mary was a mystic. She knew that deep, wordless communion with unseen personality that is the highest possible soul attainment. But that does not eliminate intellectual and volitional processes. Emerson thinks that it tends to quicken them. Mary used both intellect and will. She "sat at the Lord's feet." That does not mean that she was on a footstool gazing up in soundless ecstasy. Paul declares himself "brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the perfect law of the fathers." (Acts 22: 3.) It was an expression of the day for studying with a teacher. Mary was just now studying with the world's greatest Teacher. "And heard His word." Many people to whom Jesus spoke did not hear Him. They had no ears to hear, and He was not an easy Teacher. It took no small amount of spiritual insight and mental acumen

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to hear Him who spake as never man spake. Mary heard Him.

Neither did Mary simply drift to the Teacher's feet. Her sister's disapproval had forced her to consider the matter and make deliberate choice. The words of Jesus are plain, "Mary hath chosen." There is volition here, not dazed gravitation. Mary had probably assisted in the preparation but had determined not to give her whole time to a too lavish serving and thus miss too much of the Master's precious discourse. The fact that instead of quietly calling Mary, Martha makes her indignant appeal to Jesus Himself makes it clear that already there had been some disagreement between the sisters on the matter.

Jesus had found an apt pupil, unusually able to comprehend those things which He considered vital, and He refused to send her away. In His reply, "For Mary hath chosen that good part that shall not be taken away from her," Jesus makes place for the woman disciple in the study of theological truth, and commends her definite decision of will, in the face of opposition, to seek first the kingdom of God and let other things take secondary place. The too elaborate dressing and entertaining so commonly demanded of women make impossible the "good part" that was Mary's choice.

The same Mary again aroused a storm of criticism when she anointed Jesus with the costly ointment. This time it was the group of men disciples who brought the accusation, with Judas Iscariot as chief spokesman. And now the charge was extravagance and indifference to the claims of philanthropy.

The story is told in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and John. By combining these narratives we get the following account:

Then Jesus six days before the Passover came to Bethany where Lazarus was that had been dead, whom He raised from the dead. And when it was two days until the feast of the Passover the chief priests and scribes sought how they could take Him by craft and put Him to death. And He said to His disciples, Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.

Now Jesus was in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper. There they made Him a supper and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very precious, and she broke the box and poured it on His head and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair, and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.

And when His disciples saw it they had indignation, saying, Why was this waste of the ointment made? Then said one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who should betray Him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor? And they murmured against her.

But when Jesus understood it He said, Let her alone. Why trouble ye the woman? She hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor always with you, but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could. Against the day of my burying hath she kept this, and she hath come beforehand to anoint my body for the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for

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a memorial of her. [Mt. 26: 1-14; Mk. 14: 1-9; Jno. 12: 1-8.]

### MARY'S UNDERSTANDING OF JESUS

There is the abruptness of indignation in Jesus' sharp "Let her alone. Why trouble ye the woman?" This is not hard to understand when we remember that this occurred in Passion week. For months Jesus had been trying to make these men understand the tragedy toward which He was facing. While the words of His coming agony were still on His lips they had quibbled among themselves as to position and honor. Those nearest Him, James and John, had come to Him asking for the best places in His kingdom, while the ten had gotten angry when they found what the brothers had done. They had tried the heart of Jesus to the uttermost; their light-hearted optimism had grated intolerably upon His suffering spirit. Then He came to Bethany and very quickly Mary grasped the implication of His words, the heaviness of His spirit, if indeed He had not told her of this on His former visit. In her He found a comprehension none other had shown. Denney says, "Mary entered into Jesus' anticipation of His death more deeply than they all" . . . She met a heart over which the shadow of death was darkening with an uncalculating outburst of love that was inexpressibly grateful to Jesus."<sup>1</sup>

But the rich consolation of this act of deep and delicate sympathy was rudely marred by the hypocritical whining of Judas, loudly seconded by the other men. To them the whole beautiful act of adoration was only a waste; they measured the whole thing by its money

<sup>1</sup> James Denney, *The Way Everlasting*, pp. 288, 291.

## HIS DEFENSE OF WOMEN

value. No wonder Jesus turned on them with sharp rebuke. Then quietly He spoke what have been called the loneliest words in all literature, "She hath anointed my body beforehand for the burying." "Mary had most nearly apprehended the desolate loneliness of His spirit."<sup>2</sup> It is not strange that Jesus strongly defended her and declared that the fragrance of her offering would be wafted around the world with the preaching of His Gospel.

"No such commendation was ever before or after conferred by the Savior on any mortal of the race," says Horace Bushnell in his admirable sermon on *The Insight of Love*.<sup>3</sup> In this same sermon Bushnell continually contrasts the woman's loving heart with the reasoning power and mental astuteness of the men. This is a very usual but a very artificial distinction. These men had loving hearts; they had loved Jesus well enough to leave all to follow Him. And there were many loving women whose intuition failed them. There was the most loving mother Mary, who saw her son too closely to see the world's Savior, and there was the devoted disciple Salome, who was as dull as her sons James and John and came with them to make the selfish request that grieved the heart of Jesus. Mary had a profound and reflective mind, and it was not in vain that she had sat at the Master's feet and heard His words. This woman, usually considered a type of contemplation only, is commended especially for will-power and action. To the first criticism Jesus said, "She hath *chosen* the good part." To the second, "She hath *wrought* a good work on me." A good volition had issued in a good deed.

<sup>2</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Vol. II, p. 359.

<sup>3</sup> *Christ and His Salvation*, pp. 51, 52.



## THE ATTITUDE OF JESUS TOWARD WOMAN

This thrice-told story of the anointing of Jesus by Mary of Bethany has been sometimes confused with His anointing by the sinful woman as recorded by Luke. There are some superficial likenesses; both incidents took place in the house of a man named Simon. But one was Simon the Pharisee, cynical, unfriendly, omitting to extend to Jesus the common courtesies of the time. The other was in the house of Simon the leper of Bethany, and there Jesus was the beloved guest of honor, served by very dear friends. And the conversations are utterly dissimilar. It troubles some that there were two anointings. Of course anything so foreign to western customs attracts our attention. How common it was then is shown by Jesus' words to Simon the Pharisee, "My head with oil thou didst not anoint," implying that an act of ordinary courtesy had been omitted. These two cases were only remarkable because expensive ointment instead of ordinary oil had been used. These alabaster boxes were put up in this form as various preparations are to-day. But they were used only by the wealthy, hence the surprise and indignation at their being used to anoint an artisan teacher. And the wonder is not that two women brought this costly offering to Jesus, the marvel is that when women discovered so rare a friend there were not twenty such anointings, as indeed there may have been.

There does seem a difficulty in the fact that the Synoptic accounts tell of Mary's pouring the ointment on the head, while the Fourth Gospel says that the feet were anointed, as in the account in Luke. But John distinctly says that Mary used a pound of the ointment. That is more than could be poured on the head alone, and quite likely Mary used the remainder for the feet. This is in keeping with the saying of Jesus as recorded

by the Synoptics: "She hath anointed my *body* for burial."

Some have questioned if Mary really knew that this anointing of Jesus was for His burial. The clear statement of Jesus that she had *kept* this very costly ointment for His burial and had come to anoint Him beforehand leaves no doubt that she did know. Six days before the Passover, according to John, they had come to Bethany. Matthew tells us that they lodged there (Mt. 21: 17), probably returning there from meeting the crowds in Jerusalem. Naturally He would lodge at the home of these dear friends, for John tells us, "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." (Jno. 11: 5.) According to the Synoptics this feast was held two days before Passover. While it is a little difficult to get this time straightened out, there is no doubt but that Jesus had had some time before this in the Bethany home. What words had passed between the Master and His receptive disciple Mary we do not know. But the records show that for some time He had been speaking often of His death to the inner circle, trying in every possible way to make them understand that it was near at hand. Peter reproached Him and apparently none of them believed Him. But their dullness need not make it seem so strange a thing that Mary believed Him, and with a heart almost as heavy as His own performed this sublime service of comprehending love.

And this deeper understanding of Mary may explain another thing that has led to her being confused with the sinful woman, since she wiped Jesus' feet with her hair. Would a virtuous woman have unbound hair? Probably not usually. But like all ancient peoples the Jews, when in grief or mourning, made themselves un-



## THE ATTITUDE OF JESUS TOWARD WOMAN

kempt in appearance, and Mary would follow the custom of her day. She knew that she was anointing her great Teacher for His burial, that the odor of her lavish gift would cling to Him on the cross and in the tomb. Her disheveled hair was in keeping with her mourning spirit. The discordant note of her mourning at their feast may have been one cause of the disciples' exasperated criticism.

There is one more likeness between the pure high-minded Mary of Bethany and the woman of the street, both of whom anointed Jesus with ointment. They were both criticized for their action and Jesus defended both of them. Mary He defended from the freely spoken objections of His own disciples, the Sinner from the unspoken but most evident objections of Simon the Pharisee. (Luke 7: 34-50.) The account of the Woman that was a Sinner will be dealt with in another chapter. It is cited here only to show how Jesus took up the case, told a story and drew a parallel that put the self-righteous Pharisee in a decidedly bad light as compared with the redeemed woman of the street.

Then there is the instance of the Syro-Phœnician woman, and this also will be discussed more fully later. She thoroughly annoyed the disciples by her crying for mercy and help, and they appealed to the Master to send her away. Not in words did Jesus answer them, but in granting her request and commending her faith He gave the greatest possible defense of her importunity.

## THE MOTHERS OF LITTLE CHILDREN

In the final instance to be considered it is not stated that it was women whom Jesus defended, but it does

not need to be. Combining the accounts of Matthew and Mark we read:

And there were brought unto Him little children that He should put His hands on them and pray. And His disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it He was much displeased and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them. [Mt. 19: 13-15; Mk. 10: 13-16.]

Luke says, "And they brought unto Him also infants that He might touch them." (Luke 18: 15.) Now it is to be devoutly hoped that the fathers were present on this occasion, but it is certain that the mothers were. Swete tells us, "These who were brought to Jesus were doubtless of all ages from the infant in arms to the older children still under the mother's care."<sup>4</sup>

These women, grasping in at least some measure the gracious words and spirit of the Master, desired that their little children should draw blessing from His presence. But no, they might not come near. The Twelve rebuked them for interrupting what they considered more important work. They felt that their Master was too great a person to spend time on women and children, it was "a waste of His time and an abuse of His kindness." Clearly these disciples were men of their day who swept aside "women, children and slaves" as not eligible to participation in the deeper things of life.

<sup>4</sup> Swete, *Mark*, p. 206.

But Jesus caught sight of what was going on; doubtless He saw the embarrassed, troubled faces of the women ordered away by these men who claimed authority. Worse still, He saw that the little children were frightened, for a mother's state of mind always imparts itself to the children. That women and children who came seeking Him should be driven away by these egotistical men aroused Jesus' anger. "His indignant call startles the disciples in the act of dismissing the party."<sup>5</sup> He countermanded the orders of His disciples. What a study it must have been to have seen the change in the children's faces as, shrinking from the hard commands of the other men, they turned to see the face and hear the voice of Jesus, the man who had time for little children and their mothers. The heart of this tender, childless man reached out eagerly to touch these little ones, to take their tiny hands in His own strong hands, to cuddle their little bodies against His breast. "And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them."

Farrar says, "The Jews did not indeed despise little children, but like all ancient nations they left them all but exclusively to the charge of women, repressed them, kept them in the background, did little or nothing to mold their infant years."<sup>6</sup> The age of the woman must needs come before the age of the child could be ushered in. As woman obtains her rights as a person we see more and more attention being given to the rights of the child. Just what these mothers expected from the touch of Jesus' hands we cannot tell. Perhaps they dimly felt that a child's contact with a mighty personality, even in very early years, might so impress it as

<sup>5</sup> Alfred Plummer, *Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke*, p. 421.

<sup>6</sup> *The Life of Lives*, p. 266.

to affect its whole life. Science has at last discovered this. And when science has clearly revealed the truth instead of doing "little or nothing to mold their infant years" humanity will give its chief attention to that very task.

If we count the woman taken in sin (Jno. 8: 1-11.), whose case will be dealt with in a later chapter, we find that there are six instances in the biographies of Jesus where women were criticized in His presence and in each instance he defended them against their accusers. Once the criticism came from another woman, twice from Pharisees, three times from His own disciples. These disciples were good men honestly trying to adapt themselves to their Master's ideals. But theirs was a difficult position, for these ideals were foreign to them, and at no point were they more foreign than in this matter of the treatment of women. The amazement of the disciples when they found Jesus teaching great truths to a woman has been noted. Schaff says, "Two considerations meet here: 1—The Oriental custom, which imposed rigid restrictions upon intercourse with the female sex; 2—Rabbinical scholastic prejudice."<sup>7</sup> It would be strange if these men did not partake in considerable measure of the feeling of their own time as to woman's inferiority. Reverence for their Teacher might keep them from open expression of this, as it did in the case of the Samaritan woman, but the narratives show the existence of this feeling on their part. Jesus never gave an address on woman's rights, even as He made no anti-slavery speeches, nor any direct advocacy of political or economic democracy. Yet all these were implicit in His teaching and in His equal treatment of both sexes and all classes.

<sup>7</sup> Lange and Schaff, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 166.

## CHAPTER IV

### HIS REPROOFS OF WOMEN

SO far as the records show Jesus defended women each time they were criticized in His presence. Was this then a kind of gallantry that comes to the rescue of the female without regard to the merits of her case because it considers her weak and feeble? A study of the individual cases shows that He defended them not because they were women but because He was in sympathetic accord with their position. It also shows that He Himself rebuked women. If the thing that called forth these rebukes can be found it will furnish important evidence as to His general attitude toward woman. But first a certain phase of His teaching must be considered and an effort made to ascertain if He meant this teaching to apply to woman as well as to men.

No one respected more profoundly the fundamental relationships of society than did Jesus. His first miracle was performed to round out the good cheer of a wedding feast, typical of His interest in happy, wholesome human things. He declared that the distinction between male and female was divinely created and portended a divinely ordained union. Literature has no other portrayal of a father's love ranking with His parable of the prodigal son. He thrilled with the rapture of the mother at her babe's first cry. He suffered with the sisters at the death of their brother and with the mother who had lost her only son. He Himself



rendered to Joseph and Mary the fine obedience of Jewish children to their parents. He specially emphasized the commandment, "Honor thy father and thy mother," and strongly denounced those who had made a tradition to supersede it and so escaped their obligation to care for their parents by a trick of temple devotion. (Mt. 15: 4-6.) The teaching of Jesus is well calculated to establish family ties upon a firm and wholesome basis.

Yet Jesus' teaching includes some hard sayings concerning family affection. He declared that He had come to set the members of the family at variance one with another, so that a man's foes would be they of his own household. He would create division setting two of a family on one side and three on the other side. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." (Mt. 10: 37.) "If any man cometh to me and hateth not his own father and mother, his wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." (Lu. 14: 26.) To the one who surrenders all natural ties for His sake He promised great reward. So revolutionary did Jesus consider the dynamic that He was introducing into life that when one person fully accepted it and the other fully rejected it He felt that friction was bound to result that might even lead to a severing of relationships.

The question arises, Could Jesus have meant this drastic teaching to apply to women whose first duty was commonly supposed to be to fulfill their feminine relationships? Did He believe women mentally capable of reaching conclusions and making decisions that might have such far-reaching results? Was not the word man



used here in the limited masculine sense? Most peoples have not thought of a woman's religious affiliation as a vital matter except that it must conform to that of her husband. The old Romans had their women change gods when they changed their masculine owners; part of the marriage ceremony consisted of the wife's accepting the service of her new deities and a similar condition prevails to-day in some lands. Some religions have made the woman's hope for bliss after death to depend upon her obedience to her husband and keeping his good-will, no matter how profligate he might be, while the bearing of a male child has been thought to go far toward winning her happiness hereafter. Even the Hebrew did not trust the woman to make her own religious decisions; vows she made to the Deity were null and void if disapproved of by her father or husband. It would seem probable that Jesus would share the Hebrew attitude on this matter.

But examination shows that Jesus expected women to make these devisive choices. In His statement of the strife in families that would be caused by the acceptance of His message by some and not others, both Matthew and Luke report Jesus as giving one illustration of men and two of women. "For I am come to set a man at variance against his father and the daughter against her mother and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." (Mt. 10: 34-37; Lu. 12: 51-53.) In the last instance one of the women would have to choose contrary to the views of the man of the family, he could not agree with both of them. In the apocalyptic discourses Jesus gave three illustrations of where two people would be side by side and only one would be ready for the Parousia. Two men are in bed, two are working in a field, two women are grinding at a mill.

## HIS REPROOFS OF WOMEN

(Mt. 24:40, 41; Lu. 17:34-36.) These instances, taken in the light of the teaching which they illustrate, show that Jesus considered women to be responsible persons capable of self-determination, and required, even as men, to seek first the kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup>

This must be kept clearly in mind in studying the occasion of Jesus' rebukes to women. For an intensive study will show that in every instance where Jesus reproved women it was for failure to subordinate their feminine interests to their interests as citizens of the kingdom of God.

### HIS MOTHER MARY

When this attitude of Jesus toward woman is thoroughly understood it will help to explain a difficult matter. Few things have so surprised and puzzled students of the life of Jesus as His treatment of His mother. The conclusion reluctantly reached by most writers is fairly stated by Thomas E. Miller: "It is somewhat remarkable that on every occasion in the active ministry of Jesus where Mary plays a part she receives a measure of rebuke from her divine Son."<sup>2</sup> In this statement he agrees with Adeney, "Following the few hints that are dropped by the evangelist . . . we discover that every time Mary appears in the history of her Son it is to receive some thrust of pain."<sup>3</sup>

There must be a real reason for a fact so strange as this. No single instance can be understood by itself. Only by examining all together, with all the sidelights turned on, is the full picture revealed. Then Mary the

<sup>1</sup> The women of the early church understood and rose to this responsibility, a fact that mightily influenced the spread of Christianity.

<sup>2</sup> *Portraits of Women of the New Testament*, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> *Women of the New Testament*, p. 14.

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mother is seen long taking precedence over Mary the disciple, and Jesus, far from feeling the ordinary man's satisfaction with this state of things, finding it a source of keen disappointment. John the beloved, speaking with clear memory of his own early discipleship, represents Christ as saying, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." (Rev. 3:19.) Would He then fail to give needed reproof to one who had first place in His human affection? Surely it is only in the earnest purpose of Jesus to bring this woman, His mother, to the full capacity of her great soul that adequate explanation can be found of His words and conduct.

Much has been written of the psychology of the Messianic consciousness, its development, struggles, temptations. A psychological study of the consciousness of the Messiah's mother would not be out of order. Those who, accepting Luke's and Matthew's accounts of the Nativity, believe that so great a revelation must have prepared Mary to understand the deepest meanings of her Son's life, have overlooked two things. First, the power of thousands of days of the common routine of life to overshadow a few days of vivid and startling experience. Second, the fact that Mary, however sure she may have been that her boy was the Messiah, shared the general expectation of her countrymen of a Messiah leading Israel in triumph against the oppressor. Her troubled mind when her Son's career was so different from the Messianic expectations of the day, her difficulty in grasping the teaching that the kingdom was a spiritual kingdom (a difficulty shared by all His disciples), the shuddering away of her will from her Son's becoming the Suffering Servant Messiah, the final triumph of her faith, all this would be a worthy study. It can only be suggested here, for the present concern

is with her Son's effort to lead her into full spiritual fellowship with Himself.

As before stated, no one instance of Mary's appearing in the life of her Son can be treated alone. Therefore earlier events will be considered in the light of later developments, and a suspension of judgment must be asked until the whole has been presented.

The first view given of the mother of Jesus after His infancy is when, weary and exasperated by a long, frightened search through caravan and city, she finds Him in the temple:

And it came to pass that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. And when they saw Him they were amazed: and His mother said, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them. And He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject unto them; but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart. [Lu. 2:46-51.]

In the light of the years ahead there is an infinite pathos in the Boy's surprise at His mother's rebuke and at her failure to know what He would be about. He did not realize that there was reproof in His own wistful words that reached out, pleading for understand-

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ing, "Surely you must know where I would be, what I would be about!" Then follows the first hint of that which was to sadden both their lives, "And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them." Can any one doubt that it is the mother herself in the chastened calm of later illuminated years who confessed to Luke this sad lack of understanding, telling also how she pondered those things, the full significance of which she did not grasp until long afterward. (Lu. 2: 19, 51.)

After this one glimpse of His adolescence we do not see Jesus again until full maturity. Then John gives the earliest record of a conversation with His mother.

And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there. And both Jesus was called and His disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine.

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.

His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.

And there were set six waterpots of stone. . . . Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And He saith unto them, Draw out now and bear to the governor of the feast. And they bare it.

When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine and knew not whence it was (but the servants which drew the water knew) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning



doth set forth good wine and when men have well drunk then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.

This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory. And His disciples believed on Him.

After this He went to Capernaum, He and His mother and His brethren and His disciples. And they continued there not many days. [Jno. 2: 1-12.]

This scene finds Jesus in a high state of spiritual exaltation. It is but a short time after the baptism, the temptation is little more than finished. Tremendous experiences have surged through His soul. Jesus has not yet entered upon the fullness of His ministry, but the hour is approaching and His spirit is agitated by the vast consequences that hang upon that hour. What more natural than that His human heart should long for His mother, the one person besides John the Baptist specially prepared to understand His mission. He turns His steps toward home and finds His mother assisting in a wedding feast to which He is now invited. Mary is bending all her energy to making the festivities a success. The wine gives out and she appeals to her Son. Some commentators upon this difficult Scripture think that Mary had no thought of a miracle, only the habit of turning to her Son in an emergency, others think that she confidently expected a miracle. Alford believes "that there had been a previous hint given her . . . of His intention, and that her fault was the too rash hastening on of what had been His fixed purpose." <sup>4</sup> We do not know. One thing is certain, she

<sup>4</sup> *New Testament for English Readers*, Vol. I, Part II, p. 474.



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did not as Chrysostom, always doubtful about women, expresses it, desire "through her Son to render herself conspicuous and gain credit from His miracles."<sup>5</sup> Nothing indicates a trace of so unworthy a motive on the part of Mary. Moreover, Jesus would not have manifested His glory at the call of such a motive. For let it not be forgotten in all the wonder of his strange words to her, that Jesus does do the thing His mother asks and performs His first miracle at her request. Can it be that she is interfering, trying to force something upon him?<sup>6</sup> Would He then have done her will? Or is it as many say, "Jesus clearly implies . . . that He cannot permit His course to be directed by any influence short of divine, not even His mother's."<sup>7</sup> The stubborn fact remains that He was thus directed. He did fulfill her desire. And a beautiful thing it seems to women that He first manifested His power at His mother's request.

What, then, is to be made of these words, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" or "What is there between thee and me?" Plummer says, "Treatises have been written to show that these words do not contain rebuke, but 'what have I to do with thee' does imply rebuke," and like others he raises the natural question, what is she rebuked for?<sup>8</sup>

So many conjectures have been made another may be permitted. Godet says that often Jesus replies less to words themselves than to the spirit of the words.<sup>9</sup> So it must have been here. Jesus does not rebuke His

<sup>5</sup> *John*: Vol. XIV, p. 74, of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church.

<sup>6</sup> Plummer, *John*, p. 84. Lange and Schaff, *John*, p. 105.

<sup>7</sup> Adeney, *Women of the New Testament*, p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> Plummer, *John*, p. 84.

<sup>9</sup> Godet, *John*, Vol. II, p. 8.

mother's request itself, since He grants it. His words are more like the Boy's cry of hurt surprise when she failed to understand Him years before. What is there in common between her mind filled with "inordinate concern"<sup>10</sup> over a social embarrassment, and His mind agitated by the necessity of launching out on that public career that will so mingle triumph and failure and end so tragically?

Practically all writers on this occasion make much of the idea that it meant to Jesus a passing from human to divine relationships. David Smith, writing on the scene at Cana says: "In that hour when He accepted His vocation old things had passed away and all things had become new. Thenceforth He owned no human kinship, and none but spiritual ties bound Him to the children of men."<sup>11</sup> Then there was in Him no longer complete humanity. Nor was He longer an example for ordinary folk who must perform their duties to those related by blood however far apart they may be in spirit. Adeney says of this occasion, "Mary was losing her Son."<sup>12</sup> But if this was true it was not through any necessity of the case, nor through the will of the Son. Jesus felt an intense desire that this woman, so dear to Him through natural relationship, should accompany Him in spirit out into the great adventure to which this beginning of signs would lead Him. He longed, at this crucial moment in His career, for His mother to be less absorbed in the progress of a feast and more concerned to grasp the inner meaning of that strange future just now opening before Him.

That Mary fails for the time to do this is recognized

<sup>10</sup> John Wesley, *John*, p. 273.

<sup>11</sup> *The Days of His Flesh*, p. 54.

<sup>12</sup> *The Women of the New Testament*, p. 18.

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by those who study subsequent events. She and His brothers accompany Him to Capernaum.<sup>13</sup> Then for a considerable time they are seen no more. Other men and women journey with Him as disciples, have rare companionship with Him, but they are not among them. Toward the close of His ministry we have the flat statement that His brothers did not believe in Him. (Jno. 7: 5.) This is in accord with the story of a visit to Nazareth, given by the three Synoptics. (Luke 4: 16-30, Mt. 13: 54-58. Mark 6: 1-6.) Mark's account reads:

And He went out from thence and came into His own country; and His disciples follow Him. And when the Sabbath day was come, He began to teach in their synagogue; and many hearing Him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? And what wisdom is this that is given unto Him, that even such mighty works are wrought by His hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses and of Juda and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us? And they were offended at Him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor but in his own country and among his own kin, and in his own house. And He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid hands on a few sick folk and healed them. And He marvelled because of their unbelief.

His infinitely lonely words as recorded here indicate that He was rejected not only by His old neighbors, but by His own kinsfolk and in His own house, the word house here signifying the same as our word

<sup>13</sup> For His brothers see Samuel J. Andrew's *Life of Our Lord*, p. 116.

home. It was in this atmosphere that Jesus found the one place where it is recorded that He could do no mighty works because of their unbelief. Was it the heart-sickness that came from the inability of His own people to understand Him that here stole from Jesus His high command over the forces about Him?

Just what does the statement of His brothers' unbelief mean? Doubtless they were friendly enough as brothers and they had a family interest in His success. But like the other people of their nation they were not ready to accept a spiritual Messiah, an invisible kingdom. "They shared the ordinary beliefs of the Jews about the Messiah and therefore did not believe in their Brother."<sup>14</sup> Faith, the power to see into the unseen, was necessary to understand Jesus and that faith the brothers did not have.

This knowledge of His brothers' attitude is necessary for an understanding of Mary. At Cana Mary, the brothers and Jesus were all together. The next clear view shows Jesus and the brothers apart, and Mary is with the brothers:

And when His friends heard they went out to lay hold on Him for they said, He is beside Himself. . . . While He yet talked to the people, behold there came His mother and His brethren and, standing without, sent unto Him, calling Him and desiring to speak to Him. (They could not come at Him for the press.) And the multitude sat about Him; and they said unto Him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek thee. And He answered them, saying, Who is my mother? and Who are my brethren? And He looked

<sup>14</sup> Plummer, *John*, p. 161.

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around about on them that sat about Him, and stretched forth His hand toward His disciples and said: Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever will do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother. [Combined Mt. 12:46-50, Mk. 3:21, 31-35. Lu. 8:19-21.]

These seem hard words from gentle lips. They call for close and careful consideration.

Jesus has but recently appointed the Twelve. He is the center of an enthusiastic throng of common people to whom He is eager to give His message. Strong opposition from the influential and ruling classes has already arisen. The crowds, the critics, the inner circle, press upon Him, consume His time and strength. Just at this critical point comes the visit from His family. If ever He needed their support and strength it is now. Instead, with strange lack of insight, their action tends to humiliate Him, to discount His message and to play into the hands of His enemies.

All the Synoptics record the visit of Mary and the brothers to Jesus; only Mark explains their thought and motive. "And when His friends heard they went out to lay hands on Him, for they said, He is beside Himself." Heard what? That is not stated. But it is just at this time that He was being accused of casting out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons. This would amount to possession and be close to an unbalanced mind. Geikie says, "The family at Nazareth had heard that His brain was affected and that the rabbis, for whom they would have reverence, hinted that He was possessed. They did not understand Him and were anxious to withdraw Him from danger."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Cunningham Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*, Vol. II, p. 146.



Godet gives a glimpse of Mary's mental suffering at this time: "Perhaps also, like John the Baptist, she was unable to explain to herself the course which her Son's work was taking, and she was distracted between contrary impressions."<sup>16</sup> James Morison declares that the family thought He was beside Himself, that is "out of His senses." "Many expositors have been unable to reconcile themselves to the idea that His mother would speak thus of her Son. It is by no means needful to suppose that our Lord's kinsfolk understood Him. It is quite reasonable to suppose that, even to Mary, our Savior was in many respects an inexplicable mystery."<sup>17</sup> Maclaren states that "His own family, sad to say, as would appear from the context, His mother" came with kindly design to rescue their misguided kinsman from His dangerous situation.<sup>18</sup>

The plan was one of troubled and anxious affection. Evidently Mary was leader, all the Synoptics name her first, and every glimpse we have of her shows her as a woman of initiative. It was active fearless love, the love of a mother for her first-born, that led her to interpose here. She would save her well-beloved Son from Himself before mind and body entirely gave way under the great strain and He completely ruined His career. Those who see in this, however, only commendable maternal solicitude forget that it reveals that Mary had lost spiritual fellowship with her Son. Edersheim states the case exactly when he says it was "the depreciation of the Christ which really though unconsciously underlay the loving care of the Virgin Mother when she would have arrested Him in His work."<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Commentary on Luke*, Vol. I, p. 377.

<sup>17</sup> *Commentary on Mark*, p. 82.

<sup>18</sup> Alexander Maclaren, *Mark*, Vol. I, p. 112.

<sup>19</sup> *Life and Times*, Vol. II, p. 202.



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As such Jesus treated it. The message was brought to Him that His mother and brothers wanted to see Him. He knew their intent as doubtless did the crowd that pressed about Him. Philip A. Micklem says he did not refuse their request but ignored it; that "it was an unwarranted assertion of authority that called for rebuke which is administered not directly but in the assertion of a tie of kinship more binding than that of blood."<sup>20</sup>

Concerning the implicit rebuke, Alfred E. Garvie thinks that His mother and brothers believe He has lost His reason and must be removed, and this makes, "the interference of the family from such a motive and at such a time all the more inopportune, and this possibly explains the severity of Jesus' treatment."<sup>21</sup>

It certainly was severe. He neither went to them nor sent for them. They had raised the issue squarely and either His Father's message or His family's unbelief must be discredited. Stretching forth His hand toward the inner circle of men and women near Him, He cried: "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever will do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother." Did He lift His voice so that His words would carry to that bleeding heart on the edge of the crowd? We think so. Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth. In her youth Mary had said to Jehovah with ready heart, "Be it unto me according to thy word." Now in her maturity she must learn that far harder word, "Be it unto my beloved according to thy will." Not a Kingly Son of David but a Suffering Servant must her Messiah be.

<sup>20</sup> *Commentary on Matthew*, p. 132.

<sup>21</sup> *Luke*, p. 159.

She had not come to accept this yet, and her Son yearned over her with infinite but unrelenting tenderness.

For to be the mother of the Man of Sorrows meant to be the Mater Dolorosa. When her Son came to Cana He had just resisted the terrific temptation to be a popular, successful Messiah such as the Jews waited for, with all the kingdoms of the world at His feet. (Mt. 4: 3-9. Lu. 4: 5-7.) Had Mary entered then into the deep understanding He so desired, they would have borne their sorrows together. As it was, they were compelled to bear them apart.

We get an occasional glimpse of how keenly Jesus felt the separation from His family. At Nazareth he declared a prophet was not without honor save in his own country and in his own house. It was not from some height of unmoved calm but from the depths of pain in His own heart that Jesus stated so often the renunciation of father, mother, brothers, sisters, wife, children, that His followers would find necessary. He came not to send peace but a sword even into family life and the sword that pierced His mother's heart cut deeply into His own. Strahan says: "The family exists for ends beyond itself; it is for the preparation and equipment of personalities for the service of God and man. It was part of the tragedy of Jesus' life that He was not understood by His own brethren, and that He had to assert in unequivocal language His independence of the interests and obligations of His former home. The pain of separation from His kindred and especially from His mother, was proportionate to the tenderness of His love."<sup>22</sup> In a chapter of remarkable insight on *The Surrender of Home*, Garvie declares

<sup>22</sup> *Hastings' Encyclopedia*, Vol. V, p. 727.

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that "our capacity for loving cannot fathom the depths of the affection of Jesus." He shows how "He longed for human companionship, and accordingly His mother's failure to understand and feel with Him must have been a very severe trial for Him."<sup>23</sup> This man had watched the joyous creatures of the woods and fields and there could be no more desolate cry of homelessness than His "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." (Mt. 8: 20.)

For Jesus held no Buddhist belief in the annihilation of desire. He did not underestimate family ties, but made them the figure of the highest fellowship. Family affection is to be enlarged to include the household of faith, all those who do the will of His Father. In these words, "He that doeth the will of my Father the same is my brother, sister, mother," Jesus, using one masculine and two feminine terms, shows clearly that every woman, as every man, must make the supreme decision, putting the will of God before every human relationship. But if those related in the flesh make this great choice and come into this spiritual communion together, how great then the blessedness! Jesus, far from denying family ties, yearned for this family fellowship in His own life. He felt that His mother could understand Him if she would subordinate her human love for Him enough to grasp and accept God's will for Him. He greatly longed for her to do this.

This is shown in the Boy's expectation that she would know He must be "in the things of His Father." The Man's words to her about "His hour" indicate that He had talked with her of His great calling. The

<sup>23</sup> *Studies in the Inner Life of Jesus*, pp. 160, 161.

Preacher, grieved that she would let her maternal solicitude cloud her spirit's vision and shut her away from fellowship with His purpose, gave the healing wound that only great love dare give, proclaimed in her presence the preëminence of the spiritual motherhood that does the will of God.

Was this severe treatment effective? Did Mary finally break in spirit from the unbelieving brothers and, for the inner glory, consent that He be a suffering Messiah who was also her well beloved Son? Did she even come to travel with Him as other women did? There is a hint that this may have been in the fact that while she was at the crucifixion the brothers do not appear to have been there and that she seemed to be looking to Jesus for care rather than to His brothers. Who can believe that "Mary has lost her Son" who beholds that Son in the midst of His agony make tender provision for her future? (John 19:26, 27.) The beloved mother is entrusted to the beloved disciple. Both of them have had hard lessons to learn, and have been rebuked by Him who loved them too well to spare them until they rose to heights of fellowship with His own great spirit.

That Mary rose to these heights is very certain. The last view of her is full and clear. She is in perfect accord with the inner circle, waiting in prayer and supplication for the mystic baptism promised by her Son, now her Risen Lord. With her are the brothers, no longer unbelieving. (Acts 1:14.) This family, the One in heaven and these on earth, are now united in one common absorbing purpose, the furthering of the kingdom of God.

The attitude of Jesus toward Mary is of the utmost importance. She is the mother of the Founder of

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Christianity, the one woman with whom He deals, so far as the records show, who is bound to Him by the ties of blood. (His sisters are simply mentioned.) Was He content that her motherly concern, her love for Him as her Son, be the chief thing in her life? Many men would have been; He was not. Even so fine a spirit as George Matheson utterly misconceives this matter. He says of Mary: "I hold that mission to have been, not the guidance of His spiritual nature, but the guidance of His physical nature." He compares her situation with that of the mother of a precocious boy, burning out his body in mental flame and says: "Altogether this mother is convinced that what her son needs is not a sympathizer but a drag. . . . Now this was the case with Mary."<sup>24</sup> One dislikes to disagree with Matheson, but the records indicate that Jesus suffered under the drag and longed for the sympathizer.

We of these days have not entirely escaped from the spirit of the Jews, who held that women should attend to domestic matters, sending their sons to school and leaving their husbands free to study. With this view it is enough for the mother of a great man that she look after his food and flannels and let others attend him on the journeys of his mind and spirit. Jesus would say, "These things ought ye to have done and not have left the other undone." One view would have a great man turn to the females of his family only in his lighter moods, his hours of relaxation. The other view, while recognizing fully the distinctive tasks of each which biology indicates, would make for men and women a large meeting place of common humanity. Thus may family bonds, rooted in physical relation-

<sup>24</sup> *The Representative Women of the Bible*, pp. 234-5.



ships, come to full flowering in intellectual and spiritual communion.

### A WOMAN OUT OF THE MULTITUDE

There is an incident that Luke alone records for us:

And it came to pass as He said these things a certain woman out of the multitude lifted up her voice and said unto Him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee and the breasts which thou didst suck. But He said, Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it. [Luke 11: 27, 28.]

“A certain woman out of the multitude”—and for what a multitude was she spokesman! Blessed the woman who brings forth and suckles a great man. Let others train his mind, walk in the company of his soul, she may rest content in the physiological fact of reproduction. It was this feeling that Jesus rebuked. “Yea.” He assented to the blessedness of physical motherhood, but He would not have her rest content with that. “Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.” In these words, as in those spoken when interrupted by the visit of His mother and brothers, Jesus forever puts woman under the same direct responsibility to God as is man. No fulfillment of biological function however important, no relationship growing out of that fulfillment, even to motherhood of the Messiah, can take the place of the soul’s responsibility to God.



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### THE MOTHER OF ZEBEDEE'S CHILDREN

As Jesus journeyed toward the cross he met an instance of a mother's pride and ambition for her children:

And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way and said unto them, Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be betrayed . . . and delivered up to the Gentiles to mock, to scourge and to crucify Him; and the third day He shall rise again.

Then came to Him the mother of Zebedee's children, with her sons, worshipping Him and desiring a certain thing of Him. And He said unto her, What wilt thou? She said unto Him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand and the other on the left in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask . . . [Mt. 20: 17-22.]

James and John were eager to forestall the other disciples and get the best positions for themselves—they still believed their Master was by some miracle going to bring in that kingdom on earth for which Israel expectantly waited. The First Gospel gives the information that it was their mother who was spokesman for this pretty piece of worldly ambition on their part. It is interesting to note that it is not as Salome the devout disciple that she is here introduced and rebuked, but as "The mother of Zebedee's children." Her affection and ambition as a mother are here dominant over her vision as a citizen of the kingdom. Many have thought this if not a laudable at least a natural quality in mothers, to be treated with the utmost leni-

ency. How much of quarrelsomeness among children and undesirable rivalry and strife among youth is fostered by the pride of unconsecrated motherhood would be hard to estimate. This attitude found short shrift at the hands of Jesus who Himself had suffered so intensely from the renunciation of family ties and had just been trying to make plain the cruel death that awaited Him. "Ye know not what ye ask" is the blunt answer she received jointly with her sons.

There is a marvelous and beautiful unselfishness of motherhood. Henry Drummond in his remarkable work, *The Evolution of a Mother*, puts forth the idea accepted by many that all altruism in the human race had its original beginnings in the instinct of motherhood. But every great virtue is shadowed by its special vice and to this even so holy a thing as motherhood is not an exception. When the desire for the success of one's own offspring makes one willing to trample roughshod over the rights of others' offspring, then a beautiful thing has been perverted into something unsightly and even ugly. "Grant that *these my two sons*," said "the mother of Zebedee's children." This is only selfishness one degree removed. This other Son was suffering the heaviness that preceded the Passion; Salome had the same opportunity to understand this that was given to Mary of Bethany. But eagerness for earthly success for her own boys made her oblivious to the pain of Mary's Boy although she journeyed with Him.

Parenthood, with its large place in the economy of society, is intended to have an ultimate and spiritual meaning. This end is achieved when the parent, taken out of self-centeredness first by its own child, passes from that to tenderness for all children everywhere,

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and through them for all humanity. Failing to achieve this end in some degree, this pure spring of living water may fall back into its own pool to become stagnant and fetid.

But Salome was one of the watchers at the cross. And there is every reason to believe that like Mary she was one of the one hundred and twenty who waited in Jerusalem, and that with her sons she received the purifying baptism that cleansed from their hearts desire for place and position. Perhaps her request was granted, though in a way she would have shrunk from as did Mary, before the larger insight came. For her one son was the first of the Twelve to suffer martyrdom, the other outlived all the others, and bore his full share of banishment and pain.

### MARTHA

In the second chapter we saw that Martha was one of the women whom Jesus took great pains to lead to contemplation of the highest truths. But so vigorous and active a temperament as hers had not come readily to the receptive stage. Luke gives a vivid picture of one of the processes of preparation. (Luke 10: 38-42.)<sup>25</sup>

It is a well-known little story, this of the two sisters, the one, Mary, absorbed in drinking in the teachings of the Master, the other, Martha, just as absorbed in preparing an elaborate meal for Him. The latter, distracted, cumbered with her much serving, finally addresses Jesus in her exasperation. "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me." In answer comes the kind but very definite rebuke of Jesus, "Martha,

<sup>25</sup> See text on pp. 38 and 39.

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Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part that shall not be taken away from her."

It is impossible to get the perspective for a picture like this in modern America, where so many women have combined the listening and the serving. But it is of great significance for our subject. It is safe to say that outside those who, consciously or unconsciously, have been deeply influenced by the teaching and spirit of Christ, woman has known man mostly as a physical being. The intellectual side of his nature he has reserved for his peers, that is, for other men. Therefore it was most natural that since woman's whole status in life depended upon her pleasing man, and she knew him chiefly as a physical being, she spent much effort in appealing to his physical appetites. There is ground for sociological consideration in the little adage still common among women that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. Because of this many orthodox women have on this Scripture a little theory of kenosis all their own, that Jesus' masculinity here made Him an incompetent judge of a woman's case. Their sympathy is all with Martha. So it is important to get at the principle underlying this rebuke.

There was nothing further from the intention of Jesus than to underestimate this woman's fine hospitality, with its essential toil, that He accepted most gratefully. But a fundamental thing had to be done for woman—and Martha is here a type of what the ages have made woman. Jesus saw that she must recognize herself as a person, not merely a servant of persons. A simple meal, simply served, would answer all purposes and leave time for her also to sit at the Great Teacher's feet. Instead, she distracts her mind with

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too lavish preparation of food for her guest. She gets more on her hands than she can manage and so, flustered and irritated, she bursts in on Jesus to complain to Him of her sister. In fact Jesus Himself is included in the reproach, "Dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?"

Nothing is more characteristic of the "feminine" woman, brought up to believe that her sex was created to serve the appetites of the thinkers of the race when they descend from their lofty heights, than irritation with the woman who seems to be neglecting her strictly feminine duties to do some thinking on her own account. It is a well-known fact that in non-Christian countries one of the greatest obstacles to bringing education and enlightenment to women has been their own belief in their incapacity, their decided convictions as to woman's sphere. Probably it was in this spirit that Martha made her complaint.

It is said that Jesus' double use of her name indicates affection. John states very simply, "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." And genuine love gives courage to rebuke when necessary; the flatterers are not lovers. Jesus rebuked those closest to Him, Peter and James and John, a number of times, and He rebuked His beloved mother Mary. Now in this woman He saw too fine a mind to spend all its energies on preparation for eating and drinking, however important a measure of that might be. Her house had ever an open door for Him in His homelessness. But He did not therefore wink at her faults and surfeit her with praise as some ministers have been known to do. He who said, "Take no anxious thought," and, "Let not your heart be troubled," here told Martha that she was anxious and troubled and commended her



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sister's choice. The commentators are most of them very careful to say that it was a gentle rebuke. We are not sure it was so extremely gentle, but, what is more to the point, it was effective. For evidently Martha afterward arranged her household affairs so that she too could sit at the Master's feet and learn of Him. Therefore she was able to listen to the great resurrection message that Jesus delivered to her alone. But this did not make her a less excellent cook. When we last see her she is serving a meal for Jesus and His friends. But there is no word of fussiness now and she leaves it to others to criticize her sister's devotion.

There are still those who say, "There have to be some Marthas." If by this they mean that food has to be provided and prepared and some folk must attend to this work, that is very true. But as commonly used it seems to mean that no matter what Jesus thought about it some folk must keep on doing as Martha was doing when Jesus rebuked her. But it is not right to use Martha's name to illustrate this point of view. Bible teachers ought in all fairness to make it plain that Jesus' rebuke was not in vain. A new picture should be given showing this fine strong woman, not as the first story reveals her with her imperfections marring her service, but as she is shown at the last serving a meal to those she loves with the poise and calmness of spirit belonging to one who had been worthy of the reproof of her great Friend and of His message to her on His power of resurrection.

### JESUS' ATTITUDE ON THE MATTER OF FOOD

There are two basic appetites in earthly life, for food and sex. These can be made a part of a very fine and



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noble living or they can be used to degrade mankind to an existence far below that of natural brute beasts. Multitudes are ever tossed and torn between these two modes of living. Through the millenniums man has commonly thought of woman as created for the express purpose of ministering to his primitive desires. Drawing all his nourishment from her the first year of his life, fed at her hands for some years thereafter, he forms a deep-seated habit of looking to her for food. And she, through the long centuries when she was practically a chattel slave, found she could conciliate and propitiate her lord and master by offerings of food. Often, as in Africa to-day, a wife would tax her ingenuity to prepare savory dishes to win her husband for the time from the rival wives.

Jesus' attitude on this whole matter of eating is of interest. He had not the ascetic's disdain for food. There are glimpses given of Him sitting at table with friends, with enemies, with publicans and sinners. He said that the Son of man had come eating and drinking and they called Him a wine-bibber and a glutton. Without doubt He accepted some of the invitations to meals for the opportunity it gave Him to present His message, but He seems to have had a normal enjoyment of good things to eat.

But He had no patience with making eating and the scramble to get things to eat the main business of life. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth," He said. Insistently He demanded that men, a generic term including women, take no anxious thought, "saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" The unenlightened, He said, gave their chief attention to these things but it was not to be so with

the enlightened ones. And His significant reason was that, "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." He did not mind that His disciples husked out some grain to eat on the Sabbath when they were hungry. He did not ask them to fast although He fasted Himself sometimes, though by no set rule. "Man shall not live by bread alone," He declared. Bread had its place but it was not the chief thing.

Jesus understood that women must perform their share of the necessary toil of food production, and He glorified one of their fundamental tasks by making it one of the finest illustrations of His kingdom: "And again He said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened." (Lu. 13: 20, 21.) Speaking of His Parousia, He said, "Two women shall be grinding at the mill, the one shall be taken and the other left." (Mt. 24: 40.) Both these women would be engaged in the same essential labor, preparing flour for bread, but one, immersed in things of the earth earthy would be left to earthly things, the other doing her task with a heavenly mind would be caught up to the heavenly glory.

In but two instances do we have record of His dealing with women and the matter of food. One is when He was distressed that His mother gave more thought to the success of a feast than to entering into sympathy with the surging torrent of revelation that the temptation had brought Him. The other was this case of Mary and Martha. Here the issue was clearly drawn. Kent says, "Even during His short sojourn there He found opportunity to instruct the family and to commend Mary's wisdom in listening to His words. Although He appreciated genuine hospitality most highly

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He mildly rebuked Martha's zeal, which led her to neglect His teachings in order to provide for His entertainment, by protesting that His physical wants were few (following what appears to be the original reading)." <sup>26</sup> According to what Kent regards as the original reading, Jesus states that one or few things are needful in the matter of food. What a different world it makes when men and women discover this fact. A few things simply served, at any one meal, are enough for the body. Science has come to the support of religious teachings on this point. It tells us that indulgence to the full in highly compounded mixtures has taken great toll of human lives and rendered many inefficient. Release of the mind from the cumbering care of elaborate serving means the release of the bodies of those served from multiplied diseases. What all this means in the emancipation of woman would be difficult to estimate.

Were it possible to get the setting of the age in which Jesus spoke the words considered in the different incidents of this chapter, they would be seen to be indeed revolutionary as Bishop Lightfoot has said. They show that He persistently set Himself against woman's own belief that she was primarily a female, a creature of domestic relationships, and demanded of her that she realize herself to be a self-determining person, responsible for the exercise of the highest intellectual and spiritual faculties. He might have excused the faults of women, as so many have done, on the ground of their rich affection. Instead He treated them as rational beings, rebuked them when needful as He did His men disciples, and there is reason to think with quite as good results.

<sup>26</sup> Charles Foster Kent, *The Life and Teachings of Jesus*, p. 117.

## CHAPTER V

### HIS TREATMENT OF OUTCAST WOMEN

NOTHING more clearly reveals the usual view of man as a person in himself and woman as a creature of relationships than the different treatment accorded them when guilty of violation of the law of chastity. This has long been accounted an incident in a man's life, the cardinal sin in a woman's life, and its absence a woman's cardinal virtue. But the records show that Jesus treated women guilty of this sin as persons in themselves, that He took as great pains with them as with any class to bring them into His kingdom. Aside from some doubtful cases there are three women of this type who stand out clearly. But first a brief consideration must be given to the doubtful cases.

Tradition has made Mary Magdalene the outstanding instance of woman redeemed from unclean living. In art, sermon and story she has so long held this place that it seems impossible now to change it. Yet most scholars feel that this is a mistake. It has arisen from a misconstruction of the words, "from whom seven demons had gone out." It is now recognized that demon-possession in the New Testament did not of necessity indicate moral evil but rather mental or physical infirmity. Mary of Magdala has been by some confused with "the woman that was a sinner," although there is not the slightest ground in the records for such identification. Speaking of the common belief in her guilt, Geikie expresses the attitude of many scholars when he

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says, "Never perhaps has a figment so utterly baseless obtained so wide an acceptance."<sup>1</sup>

Some find cause to think that the invalid who pressed up in the crowd to Jesus, thinking to draw healing from His garments, was a woman of evil life. The popular supposition was that her disease, an "issue of blood," was the result of sin. But popular opinion on scientific matters was so usually erroneous that it can have no weight with us. There is nothing to indicate any evil in her life.

There are left just three concerning whose guilt there is no question. And each of the three represents a distinct and well-defined class among women who stray into forbidden paths.

### THE BETROTHED GIRL

We will consider first the youngest of the three, the one least in sin and least awakened religiously. Her record now stands in the eighth chapter of John. There is general agreement that it does not belong in that place, but just as general acceptance of the historicity of the "priceless story of Jesus' treatment of the woman taken in adultery."<sup>2</sup> After a full discussion, agreeing that the narrative belongs in another place, Godet states the general conclusion that "it could no more have been invented than any other feature in the inimitable life of Christ."<sup>3</sup>

It is not strange that there was some difficulty in keeping this bit of history in the records. Nothing in all literature strikes so straight at the double standard of morals, long tolerated even in so-called Christian

<sup>1</sup> *The Life and Words of Christ*, Vol. II, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup> Kent, *The Life and Teachings of Jesus*, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Godet, *John*, Vol. II, p. 312.



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civilization. In a day when pagan ideas of woman enveloped the infant church and tinged the thought of its members it is easy to see how the elders would feel that such a story was not good reading for the congregations. The marvel is that it was retained at all.

And every man went unto his own house. Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning He came again into the temple and all the people came unto Him: and He sat down and taught them.

And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto Him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst they say unto Him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned, but what sayst thou? This they said tempting Him that they might have to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground.

So when they continued asking Him, He lifted up Himself and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her, and again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

And they which heard, being convicted by conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest unto the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

When Jesus had lifted up Himself and saw none but the woman He said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said unto Him, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I



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condemn thee: go, and sin no more. [Jno. 8: 1-11.]

We stated that this was the story of the youngest woman and the one least in sin. The men who bring her show all the delight of gossips retailing a perfectly new story of shame. Their concern is not to reform the girl nor to check sin but to trap this upstart lay-preacher. But they know that He is hard to trap and that they must therefore be careful to make accurate statement. They tell Him that Moses said that such an one should be stoned. But the law does not prescribe the manner of death for the married woman guilty of this sin; stoning was prescribed only for those who defiled their virginity. If her husband discover this when she becomes a bride, "Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die; because she hath wrought folly in Israel to play the whore in her father's house." Evidently that was not this case. So this occasion could be covered only by the law: "If a damsel, a virgin, be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city and lie with her, then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die: the damsel because she cried not, being in the city; and the man because he hath humbled his neighbor's wife." (Deut. 22: 20-24.) The Jewish law counted the betrothal as binding as marriage, the girl as "his neighbor's wife."<sup>4</sup> So that would place the sin as here classified.<sup>5</sup> Marriage was early in Palestine, so this would almost certainly be a girl in her teens.

<sup>4</sup> Bernard Drachman, *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. III, p. 125.

<sup>5</sup> George Post, *Hastings' Bible Dictionary*, Vol. IV, p. 540.

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What was the history of this young girl so dreadfully thrust out for the world forever to gaze upon? Had her father, as was his legal right, betrothed her to some old man who was coming presently to claim her youthful flesh? Did the heart of her so cry out to some youthful lover that her voice could make no cry to the street as the law demanded? We do not know what led her to sin thus; the men who brought her did not care.

So we have the hideous scene: the woman sinner—they have prudently let the man escape—with judge, jury, witnesses, attendants, all men. It has been a common scene through the long centuries. They “set her in the midst” for all to behold and then recite her crime. Plummer declares, “The bringing her was a wanton outrage both on her and on all generous and modest beholders. She might have been detained while the case was referred to Christ.” And he brands their manner of telling the story as a piece of “brutal indelicacy.”<sup>6</sup>

How did Jesus receive this narrative from which He could not escape? “The shame of the deed itself, the brazen hardness of the prosecutors . . . their religious malice . . . all were thrust rudely on His mind at once. He was seized with an intolerable sense of shame. He could not meet the eyes of the crowd, of the accusers, least of all of the woman. In His burning embarrassment He stooped to hide His face and began writing with His finger on the ground.”<sup>7</sup> How intently a sophisticated group watches to see a pure and delicate mind brought to grips with some salacious statement or situation.

<sup>6</sup> *John*, p. 177.

<sup>7</sup> *Ecce Homo*, p. 116.

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Farrar says He bent His eyes on the ground in "an intolerable sense of shamed indignation at their coarse cruelty."<sup>8</sup> But when they had finished He stood upright and looked at them for one long and terrible moment. When He spoke, His words were brief. They had appealed to Him as a judge, as judge He gave sentence: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." That was all He said. But what flame of white wrath must have blazed from His eyes that these men withered away so quickly! How His manhood's purity must have searched out the dark places of their illicit loves that they so fled from His presence, "beginning at the eldest even unto the last." And as they awakened He, humiliated for manhood at the startled guilt of their faces, once more stooped down and wrote upon the ground.

Now we can see the woman since the men crowding around her are gone. Why does not she too slip away before this man with the terribly pure eyes looks up again? What holds her standing spellbound "where she was, in the midst"?

"Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?" Is there wondering reverence in her reply of three syllables, "No man, Lord"? They are the only words we ever hear her speak. Jesus does not declare her sins forgiven. Her soul, suddenly torn from the fires of illicit passion to freeze in horror amid the icy piety of these men who talk glibly of stoning her, has had no time for genuine repentance. He can only give her an admonition. But she knows the law of Israel, she knows what her sin means. To such an one there is a heaven of hope in Jesus' authoritative word "From henceforth sin no more."

<sup>8</sup> *The Life of Lives*, p. 265.

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### THE WOMAN OF MANY HUSBANDS

Her conversation with Jesus, as studied in the first chapter, gave evidence that the woman of Samaria had large mental and spiritual capacity.<sup>9</sup> Such natures, whether men or women, need some great compelling truth to lay hold of them or they become restless wandering spirits. Without doubt this had been the case with the Samaritan woman. She belonged to the mixed race that was found in Samaria after the captivity. Strong and diverse elements struggled for expression in her nature. It may be the laxness of Roman women's ways had reached her ears and fired her imagination. With natural daring and initiative she had reached out and drunk deeply of the pleasures of sense, of affection and emotion. As these palled upon her she grew desperate; eagerly she listened to new tales of love, of adventure. Once, twice, thrice, how common, how hopeless, her lot by this time. But again and yet once more she sought to quench her burning thirst at new fountains of love, only to find them stagnant pools of lust. The sixth time no one would give her the name of wife; she became a "kept woman." Yet she followed on as parched lowing cattle, perishing of thirst, follow a mirage.

Then comes the day of days for her. In proud and bitter solitude she carries her water-pot to the well at an hour when good women will not be there to whisper and gaze curiously upon her. It is a long time since she has known companionship with women.

And on the well curb sits the Stranger. Courteously He asks her for a drink, but she is suspicious, on the defensive. She is disillusioned with life and men, per-

<sup>9</sup> See Text, pp. 25-27.

haps a trifle insolent in consequence. Jesus leads her on, patient with her impatience, her impertinence. She argues with Him but cannot divert Him, for He is on the quest of a great soul withal a very sinful one.

She can no longer conceal her wistfulness when He tells her of the living water—oh, the burning, burning thirst of her heart! Covering her eagerness with a pretense that she thinks it literal, she asks for the water of life. But her sin stands dark, ugly, forbidding, and Jesus knows it must be faced. In all His dealings with women this is the only time he ever asks one of them to bring a relative. Now He asks her to bring her husband, not because He expects her to do it, but to uncover her wretched condition. (Who thought the psychoanalysts had discovered something new?) She is too wary as yet to be brought to confession so easily and “I have no husband,” slips glibly from her lips. “True enough,” says this strange Man, regarding her intently, “you have had five husbands and the man you now have is not your husband at all. You told the truth when you said you had none.” The woman does not cringe nor bluster, her intelligence takes in the situation and she confesses the truth of His words in her wondering cry, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.” With complete naturalness she accepts this. She knows about prophets. She has not been too absorbed with the things of sense to study, even though wistfully and afar, the things of religion. Over and over, as life has dealt her its deadly blows, she has weighed the claims of various religions. Here is a chance for her to settle a vexed controversy, and eagerly she asks the next question. Those who see in the Samaritan’s words mainly flippancy quite undervalue the insight of Jesus. Controversial they may be on the surface, but He reads



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underneath the cry of a heart that, breaking with the conventions of religion as of life, yet has long and painfully questioned the strange riddle of existence. How quickly, how gladly, does He explain to this outcast woman by the dusty roadside. His eagerness in answering is as great as hers in asking, as He leads her from the belief in special shrines and ceremonies to the realization of an immanent God. Then from that vast conception of illimitable Spirit He draws her to the warm personal thought of the seeking of that God for true spirits to worship Him.

Seeking for her? It has been long since any have sought her except for selfish pleasure. Good men and women have shunned her, the God of her old religion would have had her killed. What can He mean, talking to her about a seeking God? Can it be—some of the prophets have foretold a Coming One who shall bring wonders of gentleness and peace—oh, can it be? Breathlessly she introduces a tentative word of the Expected Messiah. Gravely, yet stirred to the depths of His own soul, He looks steadfastly into her eyes and tells the truth He cannot withhold from their anxious questioning, "I that speak unto thee am He."

How much more may have been said we do not know. But when they are interrupted by the disciples' return there is no uncertainty left in the woman's mind. As fearless and active for a good cause as for an evil one, she hastens to the city, too absorbed in this great revelation to remember the water-pot, which she leaves behind. Although her announcement of the Messiah carries with it the tacit confession of her guilt she does not hesitate. One swept by such enthusiasm as hers can hardly fail to find followers, and hers is no ordinary personality. Soon she returns with a company of



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men she has collected. Whether as Jesus suggested her last companion in sin is among them we do not know. Probably there was no woman in that first group she gathered; outcast women have access to men but not to women. But the men would eventually bring the other women. So transformed is the woman and so clearly does she present the case that her words alone convince a number. Others, more deliberate, listen carefully to Jesus' teaching, for He gives them two whole days, and then they believe.

This, with possibly one exception, is the longest conversation of Jesus with any one person so far as the records show. Its effect upon Jesus Himself is noteworthy. He so exulted in bringing this dissolute woman to know God that when His disciples came His appetite was quite gone. To them He said, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me and to finish His work." These words at this time indicate that He had found a remarkable exhilaration in dealing with this soul and seeing it expand under the warm rays of truth. Here was a nature sinful but deep. She had refused to be circumscribed by the petty conventions of her day, but in seeking for something bigger than the monotonous grind she had lost her way and fallen into sickening slime. But the mental grasp and insight was there and its response quickened all the Messianic intensity of Jesus' nature. "Say not ye," He cried, "there are yet four months and then cometh harvest? Open your eyes, See? The harvest is white now, it is upon us! And, oh, the eternal value of the reaping! Such joy, such fellowship of sower and reaper!" It is scarcely too much to say that her eager acceptance

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of His message thrilled the Teacher as much as the one taught.

This woman, married five times and perhaps divorced as often, had not even the farce of pretended marriage in her sixth alliance. One more step down and she would become a common woman of the street. The Greek orator Lysias stated that in the moment when a woman loses her chastity her mind changes,<sup>10</sup> and it has been commonly believed that this sin has had some occult effect upon women that it did not produce upon men, making it useless to try to uplift them. Many would say of the Samaritan woman that there would be no sense of delicacy left and that with this gone, a woman is hopeless, but Jesus "not only did not shrink from entering into conversation with her, but lavished on this one auditor some of His choicest utterances."<sup>11</sup> With great care Jesus drew her on from what some count a flippant and mocking unbelief to where she became an eager evangelist for Him.

### THE WOMAN OF THE STREET

The third authentic instance of Jesus' treatment of women guilty of immoral sex relationships is given only in the Gospel of Luke. This is the woman who had been deepest in sin of the three, and is farthest advanced spiritually when she appears in the narrative. She has been falsely identified with both Mary of Magdala and Mary of Bethany. Bernard Weiss says of this "the identification of both women with Mary of Bethany is absolutely untenable."<sup>12</sup> The careful dis-

<sup>10</sup> Quoted by Edward Westermarck, *The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*, Vol. II, p. 440.

<sup>11</sup> *Women of the New Testament*, p. 95.

<sup>12</sup> *The Life of Christ*, Vol. II, p. 135.

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cussion of Andrews shows three distinct women.<sup>13</sup> This woman's name is not given. She belonged to that tragic class whom Lecky has immortalized in unforgettable words: "This unhappy being whose name it is a shame to speak; who counterfeits with a cold heart the transports of affection, and submits herself as the passive instrument of lust; who is scorned and insulted as the vilest of her sex and doomed for the most part to disease and abject wretchedness and an early death, appears in every age as the perpetual symbol of the degradation and sinfulness of man. Herself the supreme type of vice, she is ultimately the most efficient guardian of virtue. But for her the unchallenged purity of countless happy homes would be polluted and not a few who, in the pride of their untempted chastity think of her with an indignant shudder, would have known the agony of remorse and despair. On that one degraded and ignoble form were concentrated all the passions that fill the world with shame. She remains, while creeds and civilizations rise and fall, the eternal priestess of humanity, blasted for the sins of the people."<sup>14</sup>

For multiplied centuries the world, holding with Lecky to the moral hopelessness of man, has openly countenanced the maintenance of a class of women outside the home, frequently in the temples of idol-worship, where men could give expression to physical desire without the semblance of that affection and life union that were intended to sanctify and ennoble it. Science has very tardily, but now at last emphatically,

<sup>13</sup> *The Life of Our Lord*, pp. 281-286.

<sup>14</sup> William E. H. Lecky, *History of European Morals*, Vol. II, p. 283. This long-held belief that women of vice were a protection to women of virtue is now considered to be the exact opposite of the truth.

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come to the support of Christianity, declaring this physically, mentally and socially detrimental.

The law required that any Hebrew woman be put to death if she betrayed her chastity, but there was nothing in Hebrew law to hinder the man from associating with this class of women of another race. While the Jews, like other people, did not always enforce their laws, it is quite likely that this woman, plying her trade in the streets of a Jewish city, was of alien blood, one of the "strange women" so strongly denounced in the Book of Proverbs.

But all that life was in the past. She was one of those harlots who, along with publicans and other sinners, so aroused the ire of the observant Pharisees by their acceptance of Jesus and His acceptance of them. The public woman is now the redeemed penitent, and she watches every possible chance of learning what is expected in her strange new life. So she follows the group down to where a prominent man has invited Jesus to dine, for the open dining hall makes it possible for her to slip in and listen.

And one of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And they went into the Pharisee's house and sat down to meat. And behold, a woman in the city that was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with her tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

Now when the Pharisee which had bidden Him saw it, he spake within himself saying, This man

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if He were a prophet would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him; for she is a sinner.

And Jesus, answering, said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto you. And he said, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

And He turned to the woman and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto you, her sins, which were many, are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with Him began to say one to another, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And He said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace. [Lu. 7: 36-50.]

In the house where He had been invited to dine this woman saw her new-found Savior openly and deliberately slighted. The common courtesies of the times,



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accorded to any guest, were denied Him. This seemed unendurable to the worshipping woman. It may be that some earnings from her profligate life were still in her possession, perhaps she still owned some of the exquisite refinements by which she had made alluring her trade, possibly the rich gifts of her recent companions were still lying forgotten where she had left them when she heard that voice teaching in the street. At any rate this insult to her Lord need not go entirely unmitigated. Her flying feet soon secure the alabaster box of ointment, and if it cost all she has it seems cheap to her grateful heart. Claspings it tightly, she hastens back to the scene. Her Master's head should have been anointed with oil—but she cannot presume to touch His head. His feet—the common dirt of the roadside settles upon them, yes, she will dare to approach His feet. But at the touch of them her pent emotions, divided between indignation toward Simon and thankfulness to her Savior, pass beyond her control and swift tears stream from her eyes upon His dusty feet. Her hair is all she has to wipe away her flowing tears. Another man would have rebuked her foolish lack of self-control, but this Man says nothing. Conscious that she is understood and forgiven, in a passion of adoring gratitude she presses kiss after kiss upon His feet and pours upon them the fragrant cooling ointment.

The whole proceeding is most repugnant to the host. "The Pharisee would have started back from the touch, still more from the tear, of such an one; he would have wiped away the fancied pollution and driven off the intruder with a curse."<sup>15</sup> Moreover he was certain that no teacher would allow such a being to

<sup>15</sup> Farrar, *Life of Christ*, Vol. I, p. 299.



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publicly approach him if he could discern what sort of creature she was. It was evident to his mind that Jesus did not understand that she was a harlot, so He could not be a prophet. He did not voice his conclusion, but his thoughts were so loud that Jesus overheard them. As was His wont He told a parable and He gave an interpretation of it that put the sneering Pharisee to shame before the redeemed woman of the streets.

So far as the records show this is the only person Jesus ever commended for both faith and love, indeed the only one commended for love. It was a striking word that He said of her, "for she loved much." All who work with the drifting derelicts of underworld women are aware that in the beginning a number of them have loved "not wisely but too well." O love, what crimes are committed in thy name! Perhaps Jesus saw in this despised denizen of the streets a mighty power of affection that, misplaced and abused in her youth, had led to all her misery and shame. Now, burned clean in the hot fires of repentance, He thought it a love white enough to be acceptable to God and He held it up for the emulation of Simon and His kind.

### DID NOT IGNORE SIN

There is one thing that needs to be noted in Jesus' dealing with these women, He did not palliate their sin. The few who have broken away from the uniform harshness and lack of human feeling which has been their customary treatment have been inclined to shower them with a sickly sentiment most detrimental to them and to society. But before studying this phase of Jesus' attitude, we may well consider one or two of the

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rare cases history gives us where great teachers have instructed such women.

Socrates declared that he himself learned much from a kind of courtesan prophetess, Diotima. There is record of a considerable discussion he had with the harlot Theodota. He told her that she should close her doors against the insolent, rejoice greatly in her lovers' successes, etc. "Having carried on a cheerful and perfectly unembarrassed conversation with her, with no kind of reproach on his part, either expressed or implied, and with no trace of timidity or effrontery or of embarrassed guilt on her part, the best and wisest of the Greeks left his hostess with a graceful compliment to her beauty."<sup>16</sup>

And there is this occurrence in the ministry of another great teacher. "When Ambapali the harlot heard that the Blessed One [Gautama Buddha] was staying in her own mango-grove," she sent for him to come and dine with her. Although noble young men of the community jealously urged him to accept their invitation instead, the Buddha, with his disciples, went to dine with her and "instructed, excited and delighted the harlot Ambapali with religious discourse," surely a kindly thing for the gentle Buddha to do. Then he "rose from his seat and departed hence,"<sup>17</sup> without having made, so far as we can tell, any more reference to her sinful life than did Socrates to Theodota.

These incidents should not be undervalued. When men deal continually and cheerfully with men guilty of a certain sin without rebuking it, why should they not give the same comfort to the women companions of these men? If one have but a little surcease from

<sup>16</sup> Lecky, Vol. II, p. 296.

<sup>17</sup> *Buddhist Suttas*, 2: 16-24.

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sorrow to give, then let it be given by all means. But if One have deliverance, then that means a new heaven and a new earth. To Socrates, knowledge was the ultimate goal, to Buddha, freedom from pain, from the misery engendered by desire. But this Man of Nazareth put His emphasis upon moral righteousness. And nowhere is this contrast seen more clearly than in His dealing with these women. He did not instruct them far, and He did not comfort them, until He had brought them face to face with their sin—and He used no flowery euphemisms to express it. The betrothed girl, just awakening to the power of her womanhood, He commanded to sin no more. She would never escape from the mingled sternness and gentleness of those words and that tone. He probed the depths of the Samaritan woman's past until her wickedness was frankly faced and condemned. Of the sinful woman from the street He declared that her sins were many. No false sense of either delicacy or compassion caused Him to deal lightly with this evil. He knew how sin against the fundamental relationships brings degradation upon both the individual and society. And there is such essential suffering to women where wrong sex relationships are involved that it is no kindness to their sex to treat these matters lightly.

But, their evil fairly faced, Jesus treats these women as human beings. There is no shadow in His attitude of that belief, common to this day, that a woman guilty of unchaste conduct can never be restored. Instead He shows consideration for their feelings, a desire to lead them into His kingdom, a confidence in their power to apprehend His message. Their many sins are forgiven; from henceforth they need sin no more, for He does not condemn them; the Father is seeking

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them to be His true worshipers. It is doubtful if ever, before or since, such women as these met such treatment as this.

It is of interest to note the background of men against which these three women are seen. The first in point of time was the woman of Samaria, not quite a year after the baptism of Jesus.<sup>18</sup> She is first seen alone with Jesus, then the disciples appear, marveling that He is talking with a woman, then she returns from a hurried trip with a company of Samaritans to whom she has testified.

The other two women are seen over against the Pharisees. In the second autumn of Jesus' ministry occurs the scene of the sinful woman in Simon's house. The attitude of the Pharisee is one of criticism for both the woman and Jesus. The case of the woman dragged before Jesus for judgment came a year later than this, and some six months before the crucifixion. It shows the Pharisees hostile both to the woman and to Him whom they force to be judge. Since this woman had not yet repented Jesus could draw no such picture as in the parable at Simon's house. But His judicial placing of the sin of these men in the same scales as the woman's sin had perhaps the most astonishing effect of any words ever delivered to court or congregation.

These two cases, set over against the hard hypocritical piety of the Pharisees, give evidence that Jesus was not using rhetoric but stating sober facts when He declared to the Pharisees:

Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you! For John came unto you in the way of

<sup>18</sup> For chronology see Andrews, *Life of Our Lord*, pp. 648, 649.

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righteousness, and ye believed him not. But the publicans and harlots believed him. [Mt. 21: 31, 32.]

John had foretold the coming of a Deliverer, and prepared them for Him. How many of these most desolate of all creatures drew new hope and purity from the Friend of Sinners we cannot know. It is not without significance that one of the chief women who ministered to Him of their substance, Mary Magdalene, could have been so generally identified with the sinful woman. We have seen that this identification is without historical basis and is largely rejected by scholars. However, Kent says that Magdala was in the time of Jesus famous for its wealth and corruption. The "atmosphere was Græco-Roman with all the social immorality that characterized this civilization in its eastern setting. Tradition is therefore probably right in saying that the woman out of whom Jesus 'cast seven devils' was a victim of the immoral life of Magdala, although it is well to remember that this is only a conjecture."<sup>19</sup> At any rate there seems to be truth in the words of David Smith: "In some quarters . . . it is deemed an intolerable outrage on Christian sentiment that one who had been a harlot should be supposed to have stood so near the Lord and been so beloved of Him. The latter contention assuredly deserves no sympathy but, on the contrary, emphatic reprobation. It is nothing else than a revival of the ancient spirit of Phariseeism."<sup>20</sup>

It is very probable that Jesus numbered some who had been sinners against the law of chastity among the

<sup>19</sup> *The Life and Teachings of Jesus*, p. 117.

<sup>20</sup> *The Days of His Flesh*, p. 210.

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men who were His disciples and friends. There is evidence that He would treat a penitent woman exactly as He would a penitent man, and that He did not believe unchastity destroyed the moral and religious faculties in women more than in men. There is nothing in the spirit of Jesus to make incredible the traditional Mary Magdalene.



## CHAPTER VI

### HIS COURTESY AND CONSIDERATION FOR WOMEN

MANY fears have been expressed that if women are given opportunity and recognition on the same plane as men in the various affairs of life it will destroy that fine protective instinct in men that has led them to extend to women many helpful courtesies. This statement so frequently met seems to arise from a peculiar misapprehension of the facts in the case. When men think of women as primarily the creatures of their sex relationships and of their blood relationships and consider them mentally inferior to themselves, they may love their own women, their wives, their mothers, their sisters and their daughters, they may show consideration for them and for the women folk of their friends. They will go to great lengths to please women who attract them and from whom they wish to secure favors. But outside these circles they are rude to women with a rudeness that easily slips into cruelty. Women whose beauty or social position have always secured for them the courtesies of life from men do not dream what the poor, the old, the plain and unattractive women of the world, have suffered from this source.

It has been seen that Jesus recognized the mental and spiritual capacity of women even as He did that of men; that He demanded of women as of men that they subordinate all human relationships to their sense of personal responsibility to God. Now it will be seen

that this attitude of genuine respect for women as persons issued in the most delicate consideration for the feelings, not simply of a select group, but of all kinds and classes of women. Lange declares that Jesus' dealings with women were marked by freedom from Oriental and Jewish contempt,<sup>1</sup> and he might have added from Greek and Occidental contempt also. In *Christianity in History* it is said of Jesus, "Another aspect of the same originality was His attitude to Women which may be described in modern terms as one of spiritual chivalry—even to those most scorned of men—while He accepted them within His personal circle of helpers in a degree all His own."<sup>2</sup> It is noticeable that in the attitude of Jesus there is no trace of that sentimental chivalry that espouses a woman's cause right or wrong merely because of her sex. He respected women enough to rebuke them when necessary even as He did His men disciples.

A number of instances where Jesus manifested this "spiritual chivalry" have been discussed and may be dealt with briefly here. We saw that each time women were criticized Jesus unhesitatingly came to their defense. Farrar says that "the apostles were so much infected with the current spirit of fancied superiority that they were amazed when they saw Jesus talking with a woman."<sup>3</sup> A sense of masculine superiority induces masculine rudeness. There was the deed of fine insight performed by Mary of Bethany that the men present counted a piece of foolish feminine emotionalism and had no hesitation in voicing their objections. And there was the visit of those eager mothers with their children when the disciples, "impatient at what

<sup>1</sup> Schaff and Lange, *John*, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> J. Vernon Bartlett and A. J. Carlyle, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> *The Life of Lives*, p. 264.

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they regarded as feminine intrusiveness,"<sup>4</sup> and "with as little regard for the feelings of the mothers as for the rights of the children, rebuked those who brought them."<sup>5</sup> It must have taken many a quiet word to hold these men disciples in check while women received such an unprecedented amount of attention.

### THE DISTRACTED MOTHER

Another instance of the treatment the disciples, like any men of their time, would have given women, is shown in the instance of the Syrophœnician woman:

A certain woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard of Him and came and fell at His feet. The woman was a Greek, a Syrophœnician by nation. And she cried unto Him saying, Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David. My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us. But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped saying, Lord, help me. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be fed. For it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs. And she said, Yes, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the children's crumbs that fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, Oh, woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt. For this saying go thy

<sup>4</sup> *The Life of Lives*, p. 266.

<sup>5</sup> John M. Gibson, *Matthew, Expositor's Bible*, p. 271.

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way, the devil has gone out of thy daughter. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. [Mt. 15: 22-28, Mk. 7: 24-30, combined.]

Here the silence of Jesus toward the pleading of the woman seems to have emboldened the disciples, and they openly expressed their annoyance. Doubtless it was exasperating. Jesus and His disciples were trying to get away from the crowd, endeavoring to escape observation, Mark tells us, and the woman's desperate cries would attract much attention. And the woman was a Canaanite, she had no claim upon Jewish consideration. Her pitiful plea for her little girl so grievously tormented seems not to have aroused their sympathy. "Send her away," they besought Jesus. "She crieth after us"—is making a dreadful hysterical fuss. Perhaps it is a question Jesus asks, "Am I not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel?"<sup>6</sup> But the desperate mother love forces its way through the opposing disciples, close to the silent Christ. "Lord, help me!" it cries, identifying the child's need with the mother's own in age-old mother fashion. When He speaks His words seem more forbidding than His silence. It is no part of His program to go to the Gentiles until the Jews have been given the fullest opportunity. Jesus seems to come perilously near the Jewish term of contempt, "Thou dog of a Gentile," but the expression is softened into the pet house-dogs that the children love, and something in His expression assures the woman that He is far from the spirit of racial pride and indifference to other peoples so universal then and all too common now. Quickly and cleverly she catches up His phrase and turns it to her

<sup>6</sup> Kent says, "Here for the first time He was squarely confronted by the Gentile problem." *Life and Teachings*, p. 318.

own advantage. Even the little dogs, she tells Him, snap up the bits of food that the children carelessly and wastefully let fall under the table of the master. She has heard something of Him, for she calls Him the Son of David, and probably she has heard how the children of Israel are rejecting the Bread from heaven (Jno. 6: 32-58) that their God has sent them. It is a daring turn that she gives to His words, and would not have been safe with a lesser man. For men who think women their inferiors grow sullen and ugly if a woman wins a point over them in conversation. But Jesus "joyfully, if we may venture to say so, allows Himself to be worsted in argument, for He at once accepts her interpretation of the metaphor as proof of her insight and faith."<sup>7</sup>

Jesus could not resist the mother-cry of the alien woman. Insistent He was that women should let nothing, not even their devotion to their offspring, come before their responsibility as persons to a personal God. But He was intensely sympathetic with the yearning of any mother heart of the race. He showed no vexation that His coveted seclusion had been made impossible by the woman's cries; He broke through His program to give her the coveted healing for her little daughter, and He paid high tribute to what He felt to be remarkable faith on her part.

Jesus understood mothers. Women must ever marvel at the deft touch with which He expressed the anguish turned to rapture of the woman who hears her babe's first cry:

A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow  
because her hour hath come; but as soon as she is

<sup>7</sup> Plummer, *Matthew*, p. 217.

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delivered of the child she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. [Jno. 16:21.]

Graphic and accurate is this statement of a woman's emotions at that hour of crisis. And He used this to typify the intense pain of His disciples when He should be taken from them and their ecstatic joy when companionship with Him would be restored on a higher plane.

### THE HUMILIATED WOMAN

Jesus was quick to note and relieve any embarrassment that a woman might suffer. There was the woman who touched Him in the crowd:

And behold, a woman who was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, which had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all her living upon physicians and was nothing bettered but rather grew worse, when she heard of Jesus, came in the press behind and touched the border of His garment. For she said within herself, If I may but touch His garment I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up and she felt within herself that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that virtue had gone out of Him, turned Him about in the press and said, Who touched my clothes? When all denied, Peter and those that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee and sayest thou, Who touched me? And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me. For I perceive that virtue hath gone out of me. And He looked



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round about to see her that had done this thing. And when the woman saw that she could not be hid, she came fearing and trembling, and falling down before Him before all the people she told Him all the truth, for what cause she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately. And He said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole. Go in peace and be whole of thy plague. [Mt. 9: 20-22, Mk. 5: 24-34, Lu. 8: 43-48. Combined.]

For twelve long years this woman had been ill in body with a weakening disease. But her social misery was even greater than her physical distress, for she was ceremonially unclean; anything or any person she touched would be polluted. (Lev. 15: 19-27.) Frantically she had gone from one physician to another, spending all she possessed, but all in vain. Then some one told her of Jesus. She was poor, weak, suffering, shunned, she dared not build up hope again only to have it destroyed as so often before. But she dragged herself to the edge of the crowd, she heard His words, she saw His face. Hope sprang up again and was quickened into certainty as she listened. She knew she was at last facing the true power of life.

But she has no right to approach Him and defile all whom she touches in the great crowd that throngs Him. Yet how can she let Him go? She stands, torn between her shame to admit her condition and the desperate need of her condition. Then the thought comes, she might steal this great boon of health. She knows that He is surcharged with overflowing life; if she can get near, touch even His clothes, no one need know.

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While she hesitates, nervously debating the question, a prominent man comes through the crowd, gets the Master's ear, they start away. He is going to heal a little girl—twelve years old she hears them say the dying child is. Twelve years! She has been sick as long as the girl has lived, and decades of wretchedness stretch before her. Suddenly she finds herself in the crowd, she cannot bear to have Him go, she must have deliverance. With energy born of desperation she presses through the jam of people. She will slip in behind, none will notice—it is done! The intentness of her faith draws life through her like a healing stream. Now she can fall back in the crowd—but no! The whole procession is halted while Jesus scans the sea of faces for the one who has touched Him. His disciples think His words absurd, but she knows just what He means. She cannot refuse His call, and there before the whole company, including those whom she has made ceremonially unclean, she tells the pitiful story.

At first sight this seems an instance of singular obtuseness on the part of Jesus; surely He could have checked that humiliating confession and spared her feelings at this point. But as previously noted some things greater than bodily healing had to be done for her. There is a tinge of superstition mingled with her faith that must be overcome. And she must not be allowed to steal it! With her conscience on the law, Jesus knew that she would carry away a certain sense of guilt; there is no way for her to reach the higher planes of spiritual as well as physical help except through confession.

But when this is done, how carefully He chooses the words to lift from her the weight of embarrassment.

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"Daughter" He says to her; the only time recorded that He ever uses that word in personal address. Even to the twelve-year-old He says Maiden. She cannot be a very young woman, not under the late twenties. She has publicly told a most difficult matter to a group of men, and He says to her Daughter. Courtesy so delicate as this is beyond comment. And "be of good comfort" are the heartening words that follow, also words used on no other occasion. While His commendation of her faith lifts the whole matter to a spiritual plane and restores to her necessary self-confidence.

### THE BOUND WOMAN

The compassion of Jesus was sometimes shown by His granting blessings to those who lacked knowledge or courage to ask for them. Luke gives an instance of this:

And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And behold there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years and was bowed together and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And He laid His hands on her, and immediately the woman was made straight and glorified God.

And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath. . . . The Lord then answered him and said, Thou hypocrite! doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall and lead it away to watering? And ought

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not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day? [Lu. 13: 10-16.]

Jesus sees this woman, from whose face youth has long been fled, peering up at Him from where she is hunched down, bent quite double. These forms that His Father had made to be so straight and beautiful, how it tortured Him to see them bent and twisted out of the divine pattern. He cannot leave her thus, unable to care for herself, perhaps counted a burden by those who care for her, always herself conscious of her difference from others. Her faith is shown in her painful hobbling forward at His call; in a moment the invisible bonds are snapped, and she stands up straight, transfigured, with a pean of joy on her lips. And Jesus calmly informs the indignant ruler of the synagogue that this one poor old deformed woman is worth infinitely more than all the sleek oxen he tends so carefully on the Sabbath day.

## WOMEN "MOST SCORNE OF MEN"

Those who have not worked for the rehabilitation of straying women cannot dream of the indignities to which they are subjected, particularly by the men who companion with them. A few retain their power for a long time and keep men subject to them, but they are rare indeed. Usually a single false step on a woman's part is felt to give any man, even the one who led her from virtue's path, the right to use any kind of language and accord any kind of treatment he may choose to the hapless creature. No vows to her need

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be kept, for she has forfeited all right. When swiftly fading beauty and health and the ravages of fear have stolen her first charm, her lot becomes one of insults and curses, often of kicks and blows, even from the men who seek her.

Since Christianity has leavened human thought, a few folk have tried to bring help to women guilty of unchastity, but rarely have even these felt that such women had feelings that they were bound to respect. The most cautious and tactful approach is deemed necessary to win for religion men who have devoured not only widows' houses but also virgins' characters. But anybody can go in any manner to the women with whom these men have sinned, to those whose faith they have betrayed, and the going at all is considered a great condescension.

There was no condescension in the manner of Jesus toward these sinful women. He treated every human soul with a reverence that must have created in it a new self-respect. When He saw the intense emotion of the woman that was a sinner and the undisguised contempt of Simon, He openly acknowledged her as a disciple and told a story that, whether it did the Pharisee any good or not, was certainly calculated to restore assurance and self-confidence to the nameless woman. The girl brought to Him for judgment had endured enough of blistering shame. To her He only said, with a wistful tenderness for her young uncontrolled nature, "Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more." Such consideration from such a personality would go far to help her to fulfill His command.

## HIS COURTESY AND CONSIDERATION FOR WOMEN

### HIS OWN CIRCLE

But Jesus did not simply reverse the usual custom of men. He treated with courtesy and consideration those usually despised or disregarded. He also showed the finest regard for the women of His own circle. True, toward them His courtesy was unlike that usually shown to women. He did not give in good-humoredly to them as one might to the whims of a child. We have seen how He held firmly to His course although it brought a measure of division between Himself and His mother for a time. He did better than humor her, He converted her to a higher conception of the mission of the Messiah. Then there was Salome who traveled with Him and doubtless ministered unto Him. Because of His high regard for her and what she had done for Him He did not turn her aside with an easy promise about her boys, or flatter her for having so goodly a pair of sons, or even praise her alert maternal affection. Any of these would have seemed a polite thing to do. Instead, He thought enough of her personality to show her along with her sons how selfish in reality was their seeking for better places than the others.

There is one view of the Bethany sisters that might be touched upon here:

Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto Him saying, Lord, behold, him whom



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thou lovest is sick. . . . Then when Jesus came, He found that he had lain in his grave four days already.

Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off. And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him; but Mary sat still in the house. Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died. . . . And she went her way and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come and calleth for thee. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came unto Him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met Him. . . . Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying unto Him, Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews weeping that came with her, He groaned in spirit and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto Him, Come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved him. . . . [Jno. 11: 1-45.]

Luke and John together give us a very clear picture of the Bethany home and the relation of Jesus to it. The friction of the sisters over their tasks is so lifelike, their difference of temperament stands out so vividly. And just as lifelike is the closeness between them in their hour of bereavement. For four days they have sat in their desolated home, subjected to the open

mourning of their day, the open house with the neighbors coming and going, trying to comfort them for the loss of their adored brother. When they can get a few minutes alone they have clasped each other and sobbed, "Oh, if He had only come! Can it be possible the message never reached Him? How could He fail us at this hour, He loved our Lazarus so!"

Then the word reaches them that He is coming, has reached Jerusalem, has started to Bethany. Martha the active cannot wait longer, immediately she starts to meet Him; but Mary sits still with her grief. Martha has listened diligently since His rebuke, she has learned many things; but some things still need to be done to prepare her for the miracle, and to her Jesus gives His whole attention in the great resurrection message. This done, Jesus sends a message to Mary. He would have her too come to Him, that He might meet her also away from the curious eyes of on-lookers. At her sister's whispered message, The Master has come and calleth for you, Mary rouses herself and goes on swift feet to where He waits. Unfortunately no privacy is granted them. The neighbors, who have not the insight to withdraw from a soul in its transports of grief, follow to see her weep at the tomb. Her words to Him are the same as Martha's, but Jesus goes into no explanation with her, He knows she is ready for the miracle. But her grief strangely moves Him and He also weeps. His tears are not for Lazarus as the watchers think, for He knows He is shortly going to speak life to him. They are rather the result of a deep fellowship with the spirit of the woman. Here His heart is melted to tears by her intense grief; a few months later her heart shall suffer with Him as the

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fierce pain of His approaching Passion sweeps over His soul.

There was a rare and beautiful sympathy between this student and her great Teacher, probably as close a bond as that between Jesus and the beloved disciple, indeed closer in understanding, for she entered into the expectation of His tragic death as John did not begin to do. And it must not be forgotten that He was perfectly human, the glamour of divinity that has lifted His actions from the human plane in the minds of men since His resurrection was not about Him then, His disciples but vaguely grasped it, the watchers not at all. Perhaps comments had already been made about the devotion of Mary to her Master; that might explain her not hastening out to meet Him as the householder Martha did. In any case it was an act of thoughtful courtesy on His part to send for her—we have no record of His ever sending for any other person to come to Him. And so far as the records show, while He wept over many, Mary is the only person with whom He ever wept.

## THE DESOLATE WOMEN

Next to outcast women there is no class that has found life so hard in the various countries and the various centuries as those women whose husbands have died. It is not a century since Christian people were holding mass meetings in England, petitioning Parliament to depart enough from its custom of not interfering in religious matters in India to stop the compulsory suicide of widows by burning on the funeral pyres of their husbands.<sup>8</sup> To those touched ever so slightly

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix E.

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by Christian ideals such a thing seems so horrible as to be unbelievable, but India is not by any means the only land where this has been a common occurrence. Dan Crawford's chapter on Red Sunsets<sup>9</sup> reveals with sickening vividness how to this day tribes of Africa murder many wives as sacrifices when a great chief dies so that he will have plenty of women as he journeys to the spirit world. W. P. Livingstone in his story of her life tells how the missionary, Mary Slessor, when made a judge by the English government, had the rare pleasure of stopping in her district this carnage among her black sisters. And if white-skinned folk draw themselves up in conscious superiority they should know that, about the time Christ lived in Palestine, some of their ancestors expected the widowed woman to hang herself on her husband's grave.<sup>10</sup>

It would be a long story to enter into what women bereaved of their husbands have suffered the world over. The Hebrew law is most admirable in its splendid provisions and the Hebrew literature in its injunctions of kindness unto widows and orphans, but like law and good advice the world over it was not always carried out. In any society where women are economically dependent upon men and untrained to meet life outside their own household the lot of the widow is bound to be a hard one. She is deprived at one stroke of the husband's affection and companionship, of the father's coöperation in the guidance of the children, of the breadwinner's financial support. Those who have not investigated have no conception of how often to-day, in a so-called Christian civilization, men take advantage of widows in legal and industrial transactions. Many

<sup>9</sup> Dan Crawford, *Thinking Black*.

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix E.

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widows and other poor people have learned to their sorrow that it is cheaper to endure a flagrant wrong than to go into court where delays eat up their time and money, and technicalities they cannot understand come between them and justice.

Jesus' words give insight into the common treatment of women in His time and His own feeling in regard to it. There is a revealing parable:

There was in a city a judge which feared not God neither regarded man. And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. [Lu. 18: 2-5.]

How plainly we see the woman with no money, no influence, nothing but her feeble woman's voice, her woman's weapon of nagging. Again and again she goes only to learn that her case has been postponed by the well-fed autocrat on the bench. She shrinks from the court-room atmosphere, the eyes of curious men, the ungracious judge. But her great need, perhaps there are hungry children, drives her back continually in a desperation that makes her seem almost dangerous. At last the judge does from exasperation what he will not do from motives of justice or mercy, he grants her request to get rid of her.

But not always could such tardy and reluctant justice be secured. The scribes were the jurists of that day, and widows are usually at the mercy of lawyers. The marvel is that Jesus was not crucified sooner than He



was, so clearly did He see, and so impolitic was He in speaking of what He saw:

And in the hearing of all the people He said unto His disciples, Beware of the scribes, who desire to walk in long robes, and love salutations in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts; who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers; these shall receive greater damnation. [Lu. 20: 45-47; Mk. 12: 38-40.]

His heart was hot with indignation when He saw these men strutting about in religious robes, mouthing pious phrases, while they in their feasts literally ate up the humble dwellings of dispossessed widows.

It is not an accident that Mark and Luke immediately follow these words with Jesus' statement on the actual value of religious contributions:

And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and He looked up and saw the people casting their gifts into the treasury; and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites which make a farthing. And He called unto Him His disciples and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, This poor widow hath cast in more than they all. For they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living. [Lu. 21: 1-4. Mk. 12: 41-44.]

Had the rich man not had such superfluity to give from, the widow might not have had to give from such want. Had the scribes not dined on her house recently,



she might not have gone supperless to bed after offering "all the living that she had."

But Jesus knew that more dreadful than a widow's wrongs was her loneliness. Nowhere is His quick sympathy more clearly seen than on the occasion of His visit to Nain:

Now when He came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her He had compassion on her and said unto her, Weep not. And He came and touched the bier; and they that bare him stood still. And He said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And He delivered him unto his mother. [Lu. 7: 11-15.]

Not always are widows poor, and this woman seemed to have wealth and position. A large part of her little city had turned out to honor her dead; probably there were many of the hired mourners that only money could procure. But she was left in a poverty greater than that of material things; death had claimed her husband, then her only son. Although "much people" accompanied Jesus she was too grief-stricken to note their approach, she made no request of Him. But He could not pass a mother heart on the road torn by such sorrow as hers. Bidding her cease her weeping, He restored into her arms her son, the greatest gift a widowed mother ever received.

Was there a special reason back of the peculiar sympathy of Jesus for women who were widows? When Joseph is last seen Mary's first-born is twelve years old.

When the family next appears at Cana Joseph is undoubtedly dead. "That he died before Jesus entered upon His public ministry is a well-established tradition."<sup>11</sup> When was that death? If it came soon after the trip to Jerusalem it would come in the early youth of Jesus. And the family had been poor in Joseph's lifetime; Mary's purification offering of two young doves had been that permitted only to the poor. (Lev. 12: 8.) Had the citizens of Nazareth pointed out, "The widow Mary's boy" as He passed in faded garments through their streets? Was the memory of those humble days one reason the people of Nazareth objected so that He should set Himself up as Messiah, and is that why he told of the prophet Elijah passing others by to bestow kindness upon the widow Serepta of Sidon? (Lu. 4: 25, 26.) Had Jesus heard His mother plead again and again with an indifferent judge that he prevent her little home from being devoured by an adversary? Did He know at what cost His mother gave her temple offering and had He seen her flush with embarrassment when it was so small and that of her neighbors so large? When He saw the widow of Nain bereaved of her only son, was there a quick rush of memory to the years of His twenties when a mother and younger brothers and sisters leaned on the carpenter's arm? None of these things are improbable. It is not without significance that it is His next brother James (Gal. 1: 19), the one upon whom the responsibility of eldest brother would fall when Jesus left to begin His ministry, who gave that unique definition of true religion:

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the  
Father is this, *To visit the fatherless and the*

<sup>11</sup> Kent, *The Life and Teachings of Jesus*, p. 49.

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*widows in their affliction* and to keep himself unspotted from the world. [Jas. 1: 27.]

Much can be only conjecture. But this we know. On the cross His last word of concern for a human being was the tender provision He made for His widowed mother Mary.

It is impossible to find in Jesus the faintest hint of the overbearing or condescending manner toward woman so common in men who count theirs the superior sex. Instead He exhibited a rare consideration for women of all ages and all classes. Garvie says: "When we remember the contempt for women which we meet in rabbinic writings, this regard for womanhood is a mark of Jesus' perfection."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Studies in the Inner Life of Jesus*, p. 297.

## CHAPTER VII

### HIS ACCEPTANCE OF WOMAN'S MINISTRY

THE records show Jesus dealing with the poor, the sick, the bereaved, the sinful and the outcast among women, and always thoughtful and courteous toward them all. But was it only when women were in need and He could serve them that He gave them His attention? Among friends there must be a willingness to receive benefits as well as to bestow them.

Jesus was willing not only to minister unto women but to be ministered unto by them. He healed the mother of Peter's wife, "and she arose and ministered unto them." (Mt. 8: 14, 15.) This mutual ministry seems to have been the usual order:

And it came to pass afterward that He went throughout every city and village preaching and showing the good tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him; and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto Him of their substance. [Lu. 8: 1-3.]

Plummer says, "This passage tells us what no other evangelist makes known—how Jesus and His disciples lived when not being entertained by hospitable friends. The common purse was kept supplied by the generosity

of pious women.”<sup>1</sup> But not only, as commentators agree, did these grateful women assume the financial care of Jesus, they were an integral part of that group that traveled with Him, learning His doctrines and assisting with the changing crowds. It was in the second year of His ministry that Luke relates that they were journeying with Him. We do not know when this began, but it continued until the crucifixion. Matthew and Mark both tell how at that time there were present the women who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto Him. (Mt. 27: 55, Mk. 15: 41.) Geikie says concerning these women who journey with Him, “His purity of soul, His reverent courtesy to the sex, His championship of their equal dignity with men before God, and His demand for supreme zeal in all in the spread of the New Kingdom, drew them after Him.”<sup>2</sup>

Geikie also notes in this connection that the names of five of these women who journeyed with Jesus are preserved, while the names of all the men disciples are lost except those of the Twelve. The women were Mary of Magdala, Joanna the wife of Herod’s steward, Susanna, Mary the mother of James the less and Joses, and Salome, who was also the mother of Zebedee’s children, James and John (Lu. 8: 1-3; Mt. 27: 56; Mk. 15: 40.) However, we do have the names of two or three other men, like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, while of some of these women we know only their names. But of half of the Twelve we know almost nothing except their names, and when we add Martha and Mary of Bethany to this list of women we find that we know fully half as many of the women

<sup>1</sup> *Luke*, p. 215.

<sup>2</sup> *The Life and Words of Christ*, Vol. II, p. 127.

associates of Jesus as of His men companions and we know them about as well. Luke states that besides those named there were "many others."

## WOMEN NOT COUNTED

This is most remarkable considering the time in which Jesus lived and the attitude toward women of that time. One cannot but be impressed with the prominence of women in the biographies of Jesus. And this is in spite of the Jewish tendency of all the biographers except Luke to treat the presence of women as incidental. As a clear illustration of this we note that all four Gospels relate the feeding of the five thousand, but the First Gospel alone adds to the description of this occasion, and also to that of the feeding of the four thousand, "besides women and children." That is, in one case four, in another five, thousand men were fed, and a great number doubtless of women and children, but three of the Gospels do not mention the latter at all. We know that there were women present only because Matthew "loves to emphasize the wonderful character of the Messiah's mighty works, and perhaps he regarded it as certain that only men would be counted in a Jewish estimate of the number."<sup>3</sup>

Strange as this failure to include women in any numbering may seem to us of to-day, accustomed to our type of census, it is not hard to account for it. It grew out of the patriarchal system where the father *was* the family so far as all outside matters were concerned. The immediate cause of the custom was that all life was organized on a military basis:

<sup>3</sup> Plummer, *Matthew*, p. 205.



Take the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of the names, every male by their polls; from twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies. And with you there shall be a man of every tribe, every one head of the house of his fathers. . . . And the children of Reuben, Israel's oldest son, by the house of their fathers . . . every male from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war: those that were numbered . . . of the tribe of Reuben, were forty and six thousand and five hundred. [Numbers 1: 2-4, 20, 21. Each tribe is given in the same words.]

A careful reading of the above shows patriarchal society organized on a military basis. Women and children simply do not exist in the figuring. The cause is not far to find. "In the old law of Medina women were excluded from the inheritance on the principle that 'none can be heirs who do not take part in battle, drive booty, and protect property.' " <sup>4</sup>

This condition was not confined by any means to the Semitic people. English common law is derived from Scandinavian and all northern European custom that the sex not bearing arms must be represented by a tutor or guardian. So in Rome and the world over. Male dominance to the extent that only males were counted is a logical outgrowth of the patriarchal form of the family and the military organization of the state.

This certainty that the Jewish estimate would count

<sup>4</sup> W. Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, p. 54.

only men may explain several things in the New Testament narratives. These women traveled with Jesus and His disciples at least the most of two years, probably the most of His ministry. They provided the large part of His support. Yet only Luke mentions them at all in the body of his biography; Matthew and Mark add this fact of the women traveling with Him as a kind of footnote toward the close when they have to explain the presence of women at the crucifixion. And this explanation in turn is made necessary because women were the only watchers at the burial and the first messengers of the resurrection. Had not Jesus appeared to women first after His resurrection, only Luke would have included them in the historical narrative. And this was not from any desire to slight them, but simply that the custom of the time did not count them.

As at other times, so in the last journey to Jerusalem, the records speak as though Jesus had only the Twelve for close traveling companions when He foretells the approaching Passion. Yet Matthew tells how the mother of Zebedee's children came to Him with her sons to make their ambitious request just following His words about His death. (Mt. 20: 17-20.) Mark acts on the usual custom of not mentioning women and no one would dream from his account that there was a woman anywhere about when this desire of John and James was presented. (Mk. 10: 32-35.)

Having discovered this method we cannot help wondering how much of woman's service and activity was never recorded, and how often the ministering women were present to listen to discourses when we are told only of the Twelve, or later of the Eleven. This easily explains a matter in Luke's record of the resur-

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rection that has confused some, where the angel said to the women, "Remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying that the Son of man must be delivered up into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and the third day rise again. And they remembered His words." (Lu. 24: 6-8.) Swete says of this, "But the prophecy was addressed, so far as we know, to the Twelve only, and references to it, or at least citation, formed no part of the earliest tradition."<sup>5</sup> Swete is not justified in setting aside Luke's history so lightly. We have just seen that the women undoubtedly heard these words, but custom did not sanction the mention of their presence. Godet says the promise to go before them into Galilee, "cannot apply to the apostles only, to the exclusion of the women."<sup>6</sup>

### OMITTED FROM OFFICIAL REPORTS

Although it will somewhat anticipate the following chapter, it must be noted here how this same silence enters into the resurrection accounts. Since this supreme miracle was revealed first to women, and they were made the first messengers, careful attention is given to them in the beginning. But as soon as the men saw for themselves their Risen Lord, there is no trace in their records that women ever saw Him again, just as the women are not mentioned in the years that they journeyed with Him and ministered to Him. The Eleven are spoken of as though they were alone. (Mt. 28: 16, Mk. 14: 28.) But Luke again comes to the rescue and speaks of the Eleven "and those that were with them," on that first Sunday night. (Lu. 24: 33.)

<sup>5</sup> *Mark*, p. 375.

<sup>6</sup> *Luke*, Vol. II, p. 350.

Without doubt this included the women. Paul does not mention any appearances to women in his careful enumeration (I Cor. 15: 5-8.). Plummer says Paul was giving "official" evidence and would think reference to the women superfluous; "all the more so as the testimony of women was not greatly estimated."<sup>7</sup> This reminds us that when the women gave Jesus' message to the apostles their words appeared in their sight as idle talk (Lu. 24: 32.). "Just woman's talk or babble."<sup>8</sup> Andrews thinks that one reason for the incredulity of the disciples may have been that they would think it unreasonable that He would first appear simply to women.<sup>9</sup> Plummer notes that John, while he describes at length the Lord's appearance to Mary Magdalene, takes no account of it in reckoning up the number of His appearances.<sup>10</sup> (Jno. 21: 14.)

Speaking of Paul's record, Kent says: "It speaks of six appearances to various disciples or groups of disciples of whom Paul himself is the last. Its exact designation of time and order imply that it records all the appearances known at the period when he wrote."<sup>11</sup> The appearances to the women were known (they certainly never would have been contrived afterward!), but in accordance with Jewish practice they were not listed. This very fact that no Jew would have dreamed of giving women this prominence had not the facts inexorably demanded it, might be considered as evidence for the truthfulness of the resurrection narratives.

It is very certain that there was much of the presence and activity of women in the years of Jesus' minis-

<sup>7</sup> *Matthew*, p. 412.

<sup>8</sup> Farrar, *The Life of Lives*, p. 409.

<sup>9</sup> *The Life of Our Lord*, p. 612.

<sup>10</sup> *Matthew*, p. 412.

<sup>11</sup> *Life and Teachings of Jesus*, p. 300.

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try left unrecorded. We have enough definite information to show that Jesus took with Him on His preaching campaigns a company of women as He took a company of men; that having given them health of body and enlightenment of mind He did not hesitate to accept their ministry in material things; and that He included them in part if not all of those intimate addresses to His inner circle where we read only of the presence of the Twelve. Writing of these ministering women, Adeney says: "In Christ's action and teaching there is nothing but what agrees with the social, moral and religious equality of men and women."<sup>12 13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Women of the New Testament*, p. 100.

<sup>13</sup> Jesus' attitude toward woman's public ministry will be dealt with in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER VIII

### HIS FIRST RESURRECTION APPEARANCES TO WOMEN

BEFORE taking up a study of the resurrection appearances it is necessary to note the occurrences of the preceding days. In the closing chapters of the life of Jesus there is a remarkable transition in the narrative. Throughout His ministry the records show Him closely attended by the Twelve, with only one glimpse of three verses' length given in one Gospel of the company of women who traveled with Him at least the greater part of two years. But as death approaches the men fall back, then pass out of sight, and the women suddenly come into the foreground.

#### LAST AT CROSS, FIRST AT TOMB

Bruce characterizes the conduct of the men disciples in deserting Jesus as "weak and unmanly."<sup>1</sup> In praising the loyalty of the women in those dark hours most writers agree that "their faithfulness stands out in contrast with the action of the disciples."<sup>2</sup> This is not fair to the men, for reasons that will be stated in a later chapter. But whatever the interpretation, the fact is evident. In His hours of desolation and death women were His attendants.

Mary of Bethany entered as did no other into understanding and sympathy with her Lord's approaching Passion. She anointed Him beforehand for His burial.

<sup>1</sup> *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 452.

<sup>2</sup> Micklem, *Matthew*, p. 276.



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And as the fragrance of her costly spikenard clung to His tortured body on the cross, so the fragrance of her delicate deed of love would cling to His tortured spirit in its agony.

In the hours of betrayal the Shepherd was smitten and the sheep scattered. (Mk. 14: 27.) In the trial of Jesus not a friend stood near Him, no voice was lifted in His defense. The one real effort put forth to save Him was by a woman, the wife of His Gentile judge:

When he [Pilate] was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him. [Mt. 27: 19.]

But a woman's vision was a thing of too slight texture to stop the grinding wheels of Roman law when oiled by Jewish hate. The farcical trials took their course, followed by the bloody scourging and the gay mockery of the rough soldiers. Then the dreary procession set out for Golgotha.

And there followed Him a great multitude of the people, and of the women who bewailed and lamented Him. [Lu. 23: 27.]

"From the men in that moving crowd He does not seem to have received one word of pity or of sympathy."<sup>3</sup> "No disciples attended Jesus on His way to death, but there were women in the crowd . . . who poured forth lamentations. No other token of kindness did He receive as He went on His way to die."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Farrar, *The Life of Christ*, Vol. II, p. 395.

<sup>4</sup> David Smith, *The Days of His Flesh*, p. 492.

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These were Judean women. Jefferson says of this expression of their sympathy: "It was to Him a foretaste of the splendid devotion which He was yet to receive from the womanhood of the world. It was as welcome to Him in that hour of desertion and reproach as is the sight of a tuft of grass to a thirsty traveler in the desert."<sup>5</sup>

Their grief reminded Him of what His nation must suffer now that she was rejecting her King. "Sorrowful as He Himself was, and deeply touched by their sympathy for Him, His own woe was deepened by the foresight of that deeper woe that awaited them."<sup>6</sup> Sadly He addresses to these women His last public words:

But Jesus, turning unto them, said: Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the breasts that never gave suck. . . . Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us! [Lu. 23: 28-30.]

War, invasion, famine, desolation, lay not so many years ahead for Jerusalem. Some of the women weeping for Him would live to pass through it, their children would be the ones who would suffer its most terrible anguish. And when men's hearts fail them for fear, what can be expected of the hearts of women who bear the children of the world in their bodies or tugging at their breasts and clinging to their skirts? Jesus, ever sympathetic with motherhood, shuddered at the

<sup>5</sup> Charles E. Jefferson, *The Character of Jesus*, p. 149.

<sup>6</sup> Garvie, *Studies in the Inner Life of Jesus*, p. 403.

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thought of what motherhood would mean in the years just ahead in that city that had rejected His own brooding love.

These Judean women were acting according to the customs of their day, where public lamentation was expected to be made for the death of one loved and honored, and hired mourners were secured by those who could afford it. They are not, however, to be confused with the women who regularly accompanied Him on His journeys, for these women were from Galilee. There is no record that these women made any outcry; perhaps their grief and dismay had stricken them dumb. Or they may have learned emotional control in the years of close fellowship with Jesus. There is no sign that one of them broke down until Mary Magdalene found the empty tomb. Even His mother Mary shared this self-control so that she was able to hear His final brief word from the cross to her, and catch the glance of His eye toward him who was now to be her son.

And many women were there, beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto Him. Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children. [Mt. 27: 55, 56.]

And there were also women looking on afar off; among them was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome (who also when He was in Galilee followed Him), and many other women which came up with Him unto Jerusalem. [Mk. 15: 40, 41.]

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His

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mother and His mother's sister, Mary (the wife) of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. [Jno. 19: 25.]

At first it is probable the women could not get very near the cross while the band of soldiers, the accusers, the curious mocking mob, pressed upon it. It may be they could not bear to come so near as to hear the sound of hammering nails into that flesh to which they had ministered. But as time passed the crowd thinned a little and the women edged their way closer and closer until finally they stood where they could hear the low moans of His suffering, see the blood slowly dropping from His wounds, and there they heard the low exhausted tones in which He committed His mother Mary to His apostle John.

There is no word to show how these women's hearts were torn during the age-long hours of the crucifixion. But when the fearful nerve strain of it was over, when they had heard the last cry from the lips of the Sufferer, still they would not go away, they would not leave that Broken Body. It is generally agreed that the one disciple who is recorded as being at the cross had taken away His mother, although this could not have been done until well after His death, for John insists that he himself saw the soldiers pierce His side, whence there came out water and blood. (Jno. 19: 34, 35.) So in all probability the mother stayed until after His death.

But the men disciples all went away, if indeed any but John were there, which seems improbable. It is generally supposed they were not there. Certainly if any of them had been and had stayed on for the care of the body and the watching of the tomb the record would have told of them instead of the women. The

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Jewish custom of the biographers as noted in the preceding chapter makes this very certain. But two secret believers come forward, Joseph of Arimathea, "being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews" and Nicodemus, "who first came to Jesus by night." (Jno. 19:38, 39.) Great crises have strange effects. Peter of the boasted courage, frightened by the recognition of a little servant girl, swore he had never known Jesus. Joseph, who in Christ's lifetime had not dared openly confess Him, now "went in boldly" (Mk. 15:43) and took possession of the body with the eyes of all the Roman and Jewish authorities upon him. There seems to have been no change in the women. In death as in life they clung close to Him. The last offices were finished, the stone rolled before the new sepulcher and Joseph went away (Mt. 27:60), but the women lingered on. "It is evident that they constituted themselves a party of observation."<sup>7</sup> And in this they builded better than they knew, for "the fact of the women beholding the tomb in which the body was laid is in all the Synoptic Gospels. It is part of the evidence for the Resurrection."<sup>8</sup>

And Mary Magdalene and Mary (the mother) of Josès, beheld where He was laid. [Mk. 15:47.] And there was Mary Magdalene and the other Mary sitting over against the sepulchre. [Mt. 27:61.]

And the women also, which came with Him from Galilee, followed after and beheld the sepulchre, and how His body was laid. And they returned and prepared spices and ointment, and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment. [Lu. 23:55, 56.]

<sup>7</sup> Ezra P. Gould, *Mark*, p. 298.

<sup>8</sup> Plummer, *Luke*, p. 543.



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These glimpses of the women are brief but make a fairly accurate picture possible. First they stood at some distance from the cross, then some of them, at least, pressed their way to its very foot. After the soldiers made sure that He was dead John doubtless took the mother away, perhaps in a state of collapse, since he does not stay with the watchers, and the mother Mary is not there nor does she return Sunday morning, so far as the accounts show. When Joseph and Nicodemus come without doubt the women join them in the last sad rites, hurried as these must be because at sunset the Sabbath begins. Then they follow while these men of wealth and position reverently carry the stricken Leader to His tomb. They go into the sepulcher, beholding how His body is laid, probably exchanging some grief-stricken words with the kindly men to whom they must be immeasurably grateful. Then the great stone is rolled to the door—and they note how heavy, how immovable it is. Without doubt the good men urge them now to go and rest, possibly inviting them to their own homes, since the women are from Galilee. But they make some excuse to tarry a little longer and the men leave them alone with their dead. And they sit, in silent sorrow, over against the sepulcher.

Finally the deepening darkness of Friday night must have driven even Mary Magdalene and the other Mary from the tomb. Or more likely, as they began to talk in low tones, they decided that the munificent gift of Nicodemus was utterly insufficient, since the approaching Sabbath had so shortened the time of caring for the body. So, taking refuge as women will from their grief in activity, they poured some of their love into spices and ointments that His body might not lack the most perfect care. But they never used their oint-



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ments; Mary of Bethany is the only woman who ever anointed His body for burying.

There is no record of how they spent the dreary Sabbath or the two interminable nights. Perhaps they slept fitfully, the sleep of sorrow and exhaustion. But long before day they were astir, their carefully prepared spices and ointments all ready for their melancholy task. The eager Marys cannot wait for the other women, but hasten on before. As they go they question who shall roll away for them the great stone, but when they reach the sepulcher they find this has already been done. Wondering, they enter, only to find an empty tomb.

In the accounts that follow there is found all the apparent confusion and lack of agreement that is certain to be present where four narrators put into half a dozen or so sentences events including many people, much movement and many words. Each plays up some matters and is silent on others. Details are omitted, "but each report bears the mark of honesty upon it, and the divergences are marks of independence."<sup>9</sup> One thing is made very plain by all the Gospels, the first appearances and first messages are to women alone, to them is given the responsibility of announcing to all the disciples, particularly the apostles, the evangel of the Risen Lord. (Mt. 28: 1-10; Mk. 16: 1-11; Lu. 24: 1-11; Jno. 20: 11-18.) Mark says, "Now when Jesus was risen, early the first day of the week He appeared first to Mary Magdalene." That which was to gather together the scattered sheep, rekindle the quenched fire of faith, and turn the forlorn hope of a few peasants and fishermen into a world-conquering religion was first revealed to a woman. "Mary Mag-

<sup>9</sup> Plummer, *Matthew*, p. 414.

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dalene had just been the messenger to the two chief disciples announcing the empty tomb; she is to become to them and to all others the first herald of the living Jesus.”<sup>10</sup>

### WHY APPEAR FIRST TO WOMEN?

The same women who were last to leave the cross and also last to leave the tomb were the first to return to the tomb Sunday morning. Perhaps it has been held, at least subconsciously, in most minds that Jesus appeared first to the women simply because they were the ones at the tomb. But a moment's thought will show that this is a fallacy. There was no more reason for Him to appear near the tomb than in some other place. They did not come and find Him there, He came there to them. Of course the fact that they were seeking Him, even though only His dead body, might influence Him to appear to them. But the real reason lies far deeper than that.

In the last chapter we saw that when men were present women were almost never reckoned in at all. We saw that apart from Luke we would never have known that a company of women journeyed with Him the larger part of His ministry had it not been that their presence had to be mentioned in leading up to the resurrection account, since women were the ones who remained at the tomb and who first saw Him when He arose. And we saw that as soon as the men were convinced that the resurrection was not simply “women's babble,” when the men saw for themselves, they never again mentioned that the women were present when He appeared, although unquestionably they were, as Luke

<sup>10</sup> Godet, *John*, Vol. III, p. 309.

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makes plain. They never mentioned the women in the "official account" of the number of appearances. We also saw that Luke's narrative of the resurrection brings out the fact that women had been present when He foretold that event and said that He would go before them into Galilee, although the records of those conversations stated merely that the Twelve were present. Had some other than Luke, "the woman's biographer," written the Acts of the Apostles, no one would ever have believed that women were part of the group of one hundred and twenty who received the Spirit baptism on the day of Pentecost. In view of these facts, had Jesus appeared to men first, or to men and women together, it is doubtful if the world would ever have known that any women saw Him after His resurrection.

Some have made much of the fact that there were no women included in the Twelve. This shows a strange lack of historical understanding. When investigation is made into the customs of the time and the actual happenings in Jesus' ministry, the marvel is that so large a place could be made for women as He made for them; there are hints that His disciples were greatly perplexed, to put it mildly, by the attention He bestowed upon them and the place He made for them. It was to a woman that Jesus made the first definite statement of His Messiahship (Chapter II). This woman of Samaria went out and announced to a company of men both her experience and His Messiahship. He did not rebuke her for serving as an evangelist—bearer of good tidings—instead He halted His journey and gave two days of His time to complete the work she had begun. Schaff says of the woman of Samaria, "She has been justly regarded as a fit illustration of the proper work of the church, viz., to be a witness of

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Christ and thus to lead men to Him as the Savior of the world.”<sup>11</sup>

And it was to a woman that He made the first revelation of His completed Messiahship, His glory as the Risen Lord. Not only so, but “a solitary woman was the first to announce the resurrection.”<sup>12</sup> Women were the first evangelists—bearers of good news—of the world’s greatest hope. Andrews thinks that two distinct messages were sent to the apostles by the women. Mary Magdalene was instructed to tell them the great fact of the resurrection, and by reference to the ascension remind them of His last discourse, while to the other women were entrusted the message of directions as to their meeting Him in Galilee.<sup>13</sup>

Many have construed certain words of St. Paul’s to mean that women must never preach or teach religious things to men. Yet here Paul’s Master, who certainly could have appeared directly to the apostles had He so chosen, commanded the women, particularly Mary Magdalene, to instruct the chief men of the Christian Church in that which became the distinguishing doctrine of that first generation of Christians, the doctrine of the resurrection. “Go tell His disciples and Peter,” said the angel to the women. “Go tell my brethren” said Jesus to them. Nor were they warned to take them one at a time; a public statement is here intended.

“And Peter.” There seems a kind of irony, in view of the belief so long maintained by many that a woman must never proclaim religious truth to men, that this reputed head of the church, into whose hands some think the keys were given, received the announcement of the crowning fact and doctrine of Christianity from

<sup>11</sup> Lange and Schaff, *John*, p. 163.

<sup>12</sup> Swete, *Mark*, p. 379.

<sup>13</sup> Andrews, *Life of Our Lord*, pp. 603, 604.

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the lips of Mary Magdalene. Mary Magdalene was doubtless to the women what Peter was to the men of Jesus' early followers, the active aggressive leader. Her name leads the lists of women given and is the only one never omitted. Her legendary past may or may not have been true; there is no historical basis for it. She was a woman of considerable wealth probably, but her chief riches were in her strong vigorous personality yielded in complete devotion to the Christ.

Jesus' granting to women His first appearance as Risen Lord, and charging them with the first announcement of that momentous event, is a fitting close to His relationship with women throughout His earthly career. It is in perfect keeping with His uniform habit of treating them as persons of such mental and spiritual capacity as to call for the same consideration that is customarily shown to men.

## CHAPTER IX

### HIS SOCIAL TEACHING THAT AFFECTED WOMAN

THE various occasions that reveal the attitude of Jesus toward woman have now been considered. Some may have wondered why this study has dealt entirely with illustrations and not at all with teachings. The answer is that Jesus gave no specific teaching concerning woman. In this He differed greatly from other religious teachers. A careful study of the sacred books of various peoples shows pages and pages given to a discussion of women, their nature, how they should be treated (sometimes how they should be avoided), different treatment of male and female children, and many other things. Not one word of this can be found in the teachings of Jesus. Either He ignored women entirely or He so believed in the equality of men and women that all His teaching applies to humanity without sex distinction. An examination of the records that show His treatment of the women with whom He came in contact shows that the latter and not the former is the case.

While Jesus gave no special teaching concerning her, some of His general teaching is of very great importance in showing His attitude toward woman. His social teaching that particularly affects her is found in His brief but strong words on marriage, divorce, and social sins:

Ye have heard that it hath been said in old times, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I



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say unto you, Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a bill of divorcement. But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery. [Mt. 5: 27-32.]

And the Pharisees also came unto Him, tempting Him and saying unto Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And He answered and said unto them, Have ye not read that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

They say unto Him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement and to put her away? He said unto them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall

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put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery against her; and whosoever marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. [Mt. 19: 2-9. Mk. 10: 2-11.]

Mark adds:

And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery. [Mk. 10: 12.]

Whosoever putteth away his wife and marrieth another, committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery. [Lu. 16: 18.]

### HIS TEACHING ON MARRIAGE

It would be quite outside the bounds of this treatise to enter exhaustively into the matter of marriage and divorce. But to understand the significance of the teaching of Jesus on these subjects the usual customs must be considered briefly.

The factors that determine a woman's position in any civilization are: her domestic status, her economic and civil rights, her educational and religious opportunities. But investigation shows that in most countries not touched by Christian ideals, women have been given in marriage when very young, and their marriage has determined practically all other matters. So it becomes necessary to understand something of its various forms in order to know anything of her life.

There are two primary forms of marriage, monogamy and polygamy. Monogamy is the marriage of one man and one woman, polygamy includes all other

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forms. They are: polygyny, the marriage of one man with more than one woman (with two is called bigamy); polyandry, the marriage of one woman with more than one man; group-marriage, where two or more men marry two or more women; and communal marriage, that is, promiscuity.

A theory was widely held for a time that all peoples were originally promiscuous. This view is now quite generally discredited. J. A. MacCulloch says: "It is now quite generally admitted that promiscuity was not the earliest form of sexual relations."<sup>1</sup> Westermarck declares that this hypothesis is "in my opinion one of the most unscientific ever set forth within the whole domain of sociological speculation."<sup>2</sup>

Whatever idea one holds of human origin there is not a little to support the belief that monogamy was the original form of marriage, all others being perversions of it. The record in Genesis gives a strictly monogamous beginning of marriage, polygyny being introduced in the decadent Cain line. Westermarck, following entirely naturalistic investigation, thinks there is reason to suppose that the original marriage form may have been the single pair. The anthropoid ape is largely monogamous, families of one adult male, one adult female, and offspring of different ages having been observed together.<sup>3</sup> Some of the most primitive tribes of people are said to be monogamous.

Polyandry is very rare. It may be found in Thibet, in Northern India, and in a few tribes in Africa. Where it exists there is usually found to be poverty and a scarcity of women. The paternity of the children is decided by some agreed method of designation.

<sup>1</sup> *Hastings' Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. I, p. 123.

<sup>2</sup> *History of Human Marriage*, 1922 Edition, Vol. I, p. 336.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 31-37.

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Quite often the several husbands of the one woman are brothers.

Polygyny is the common form of marriage outside of monogamy, and a chief source of the degradation of women. W. H. R. Rivers says, "Polygyny exists or has existed in every part of the world."<sup>4</sup> It is a natural accompaniment of marriage by capture or purchase, where the woman is considered as a chattel. Mr. Rivers goes on to say that it is rarely practiced by all members of the community, but only by the rich and great. In one of the Solomon Islands a second wife was allowed to men who had taken ten heads in warfare. David was given the daughter of King Saul for killing two hundred Philistines. (I Sam. 18: 27.)

Monogamy must coexist alongside polygyny. Nature sees to it that approximately the same number of male and female children are born from year to year. Only where a number of the men had been killed in warfare, or where they were being victorious and capturing many women, or where all had great wealth to buy women from outside, could there be universal polygyny. But where only a few actually practiced polygyny they would be the rich and great, and it would become the desire of many others and affect the whole attitude toward woman. Polygyny has been the actual practice and the ideal for many civilizations of the earth, encouraged by their religions, and without any indication of weakening to this very day until touched by some influence that has been leavened by Christianity.

Israel was no exception to the general rule of polygyny. Patterson says: "The typical, though of course not exclusive, form of Hebrew marriage in historical

<sup>4</sup> Marriage, *Hastings' Bible Dictionary*, Vol. III, p. 264.

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times is polygamy." He thinks that "although in New Testament times monogamy was the rule, polygamy was practiced to some extent."<sup>5</sup> The prevalence of monogamy among Hebrews at that time was largely due to the fact that as a subject nation, unable to fight any conquering wars, a chief source of extra wives was removed. Also the teaching of the Hebrew prophets would tend toward monogamy. But Herod had several wives, as did some of the rabbis, and the law permitted it. "The Jews never expressly prohibited polygamy until the eleventh century."<sup>6</sup>

It was degrading enough to be one of a group of plural wives, but multitudes were denied that poor honor. Concubinage flourished, in which a woman had not even the standing of an inferior wife. This not only accompanied polygamy, as among the Hebrews, but was common in so-called monogamous nations. Woodhouse says, "Monogamy was the Hellenic rule" and then spends considerable time describing the concubinage of Athens.<sup>7</sup> To these must be added a third class, namely, slaves who might or might not become concubines. "It must be further remembered that to ancient feeling there was nothing degrading in the idea of the master of a female slave being lord also of her body, any more than there is now in modern Islam."<sup>8</sup> There were certain laws for the protection of Hebrew girls sold into slavery; they were betrothed to the master or his son, but this would hardly hold for others. (Ex. 21: 7-11.)

Into a world that felt like this about marriage Jesus came. When the ever-present questioners asked Him

<sup>5</sup> Marriage, *Hastings' Bible Dictionary*, Vol. III, p. 264.

<sup>6</sup> M. Melziner, *Jewish Law of Marriage and Divorce*, p. 30.

<sup>7</sup> *Hastings' Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. VIII, pp. 444-5.

<sup>8</sup> Immanuel Banzinger, *Encyclopedia Biblica*, Vol. IV, p. 4654.



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about divorce He shifted the discussion to the more fundamental matter of marriage. "Have ye not read," He said, "that He who made them in the beginning made them male and female and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? what therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder." (Gen. 1:27, 2:24.) Jesus' combination of these two Genesis passages and His own additional words make the most succinct and the most lofty utterance on marriage in all literature.

In this statement Jesus seems to mean to put special emphasis on the divine intention in the creation of sex distinction. He does not hold with some that it was a "happy accident" in nature when two different kinds of beings developed and perfected themselves into male and female. "He who made them in the beginning made them male and female." How this lifts the whole matter to the plane of divinely planned social relationships. Nor does He grope about questioning the type of the first marriage. His statement is categorical. They two shall be one flesh. Not they three or seven, they two. And a man shall leave his own home and cleave to his wife, not his wives. However the Hebrews may have failed in keeping to the ideal, their creation account is clean-cut for monogamy. And Jesus goes back to this as basic.

Shailer Matthews calls attention to two points here. "It is noteworthy that Jesus thus regarded marriage as monogamous . . . as the result of the divine creative act. Monogamy is thus regarded by Him as the only normal, the only divine, basis of family relations. . . . Jesus sets His disapproval upon all forms of plural marriage whether illegal or legal." The



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other point he notes is, "Nor—and this is a remarkable thing—is there a trace of the current formal conception that the husband had any property rights in the wife. On the contrary, Jesus, to a surprising degree, anticipated to-day's belief in the equality of the sexes."<sup>9</sup>

It is extremely doubtful if there would be any "to-day's belief in the equality of the sexes," were not the thought of marriage, in all lands that hold that belief, irrevocably associated with these words of Jesus. They bear a union of equal personalities upon the face of them, even though the race has been slow to grasp their full implication.

There is general agreement that in these words Jesus clearly teaches monogamy. "Marriage, being ordained of God for the union of two in one flesh, is in its intention for two only, so long as they both shall live, . . . Jesus recognizes neither contemporaneous, nor, as it has been called, consecutive, polygamy."<sup>10</sup>

Jesus struck a blow at the whole patriarchal system of family life by putting such emphasis on these Genesis words: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife." In the Hebrew as in all patriarchal families the exact opposite of this was true. The wife left her father and mother to cleave to her husband. Dr. Katherine Bushnell in her book, *God's Word to Women*, has shown in a masterly fashion what it has meant to womanhood to be torn from the natural protectors in early youth and carried off to the husband's clan or household. Had the Biblical injunction been followed, the man leaving his parents to go with her, she would never have been

<sup>9</sup> *The Social Teaching of Jesus*, pp. 80, 90.

<sup>10</sup> Francis Peabody, *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*, p. 157.

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brought into such bondage. Nor would the man have suffered, having more of physical strength and not being hampered by child bearing. This is in harmony with J. Robertson Smith's conclusions as given in *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*.

### HIS TEACHING ON DIVORCE

The same condition that made for polygamy made for divorce. "A man who owns his wife as a chattel can on the same principle have as many as . . . he can afford to buy and pay for." "The woman being the man's property, his right to divorce her follows as a matter of course."<sup>11</sup>

Among the Jews as everywhere it was common for men to divorce their wives in the time of Christ. The cause of divorce was one of the subjects of contention between the rival rabbinical schools of the day. The school of Hillel insisted that a man might divorce his wife for any trifling thing, if she had burned his dinner, if he felt he had ceased to care for her, "incompatibility" as some modern Americans would express it. But according to the school of Schammai it was a more serious matter, only some sin against chastity gave him the right to divorce her.

The First and Second Gospels record the coming of the Pharisees to ask Jesus about this disputed question, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife. The added phrase in Matthew, "for every cause" would seem to be the correct reading, since no one questioned the legality of divorce; the controversy was over what "unseemly thing" made it allowable. We have seen how Jesus immediately went back of divorce to the

<sup>11</sup>Banzinger, *Encyclopedia Biblica*, Vol. III, pp. 2946-7.

subject of marriage. He stated that marriage was divinely ordained, written into nature, and not to be affected by human interference. According to Matthew's account, the Pharisees then raised the question as to why "Moses commanded to give the wife a bill of divorcement and to put her away." Jesus assured them that Moses gave no such command, but that he suffered divorce "because of the hardness of your hearts," the rough cruelty of men who would throw out the wives who did not please them, regardless of their future. Since men would do this anyway, in those days of polygamy, concubinage, man's control over woman, therefore Moses did what he could for women by requiring that they at least be given a bill of divorcement, so they could find refuge in another home. (Deut. 24: 1-3.) Moses made a concession to the rude state of society at his time, but Jesus goes back to the basic law of their creation according to which marriage was not to be dissolved.

In both instances where the First Gospel refers to divorce there is an exceptive clause to the complete prohibition, while the Second and Third Gospels make the prohibition absolute. There is much discussion as to which text is correct. Some commentators insist that Matthew is right, and that Mark and Luke take the clause "except it be for fornication" for granted. Others quite as earnestly contend that Jesus made the prohibition absolute and that the early church inserted the clause because of practical conditions with which it had to deal.

Granting the clause, it would make a crime against marriage itself the one cause of divorce. It is plain to see that Jesus held it as fundamental that the marriage tie was indissoluble. Knowing the age in which

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He lived, it must have taken a sublime confidence in the dynamic that He was introducing into human life to ask human nature to come up to such levels. But His prohibition of divorce, like His insistence upon monogamy, would be of immeasurable value in bettering the condition of woman. David Smith says of divorce in the time of Jesus, "It was an inhuman system and inflicted a cruel wrong upon womankind. It put the wife at the husband's mercy. She could not divorce him, but for any whim he might divorce her and cast her upon the world."<sup>12</sup>

Although among Hebrews women did not have the right to divorce their husbands, Jesus, according to Mark's Gospel, recognized this as a possibility. For a brief time, after the decline of *manus*, Roman women divorced their husbands. One chief reason that Roman society of that age is so condemned is that women took for themselves something of the license that men had hitherto reserved as their special privilege.<sup>13</sup> But Jesus had not come to teach the equality of the sexes on the lower level, but on the higher level. He would have had no tolerance for the opening of an evil course to women because men were already following it. In this matter His words call men and women equally to recognize the permanence of the marriage relation and abide by it.

In denying that the Hebrew law of divorce (and therefore all other laws like it) was in reality the law of God in its original or its final form, Jesus did a bigger thing by far for woman than appears on the surface. "The origin of the Jewish law of divorce is found in the constitution of the patriarchal family.

<sup>12</sup> *The Days of His Flesh*, p. 355.

<sup>13</sup> See James Donaldson, *Women in Ancient Greece and Rome*, p. 129.

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The fundamental principle of its government was the absolute authority of the oldest male ascendant; hence the husband, as head of his family, divorces his wife at his pleasure." "The wife's right to sue for divorce is absolutely unknown to the Biblical law."<sup>14</sup> It was this patriarchal organization of the family and of society that had robbed woman of her liberty of person, made her the property of her father and then of her husband. We cannot conceive now the courage it took to thus declare that no man had so much right by the will of God as all men practically at that time were taking unto themselves. The disciples themselves were astounded at His words and did not see how society was to go on if it really was as Jesus said.

### HIS TEACHING ON SOCIAL SINS

Those acts classed in modern times as social sins have an important bearing upon the condition of women. They may be classified as those committed by the married and those committed by the unmarried. Rivers says of the latter, "In general, pre-nuptial freedom was granted man," but that among many people pre-nuptial chastity of the wife was highly valued.<sup>15</sup> In ancient Saxony a woman who had been found guilty of some uncleanness was forced to commit suicide or was beaten to death by other women, and similar conditions prevailed in many countries. We have seen that in Israel an unmarried girl was stoned to death if found guilty of a sin against chastity. There was no penalty whatever provided for her brother guilty of the same sin, though there was some excellent advice for him in the book of Proverbs.

<sup>14</sup> David Aumen, *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. IV, pp. 624-5.

<sup>15</sup> *Hastings' Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. VIII, p. 428.



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As to the sins of married people, it is probable that comparatively few to-day realize the general condition in the past. "The Biblical conception of adultery is often expressed by saying that, as in Roman law, a woman could only violate her own marriage, while a man could only violate that of another. In other words, an unchaste bride was guilty of adultery, an unchaste husband was guilty of it only if he sinned along with the bride of another. If in certain cases the law took cognizance of a husband's licentiousness, it was because it involved infringement of property rights and gave rise to a claim for damage." "The chastity of the wife was jealously guarded by the heaviest penalties, but custom and law recognized no parallel obligation resting on the husband, provided always he respected the rights of other men."<sup>16</sup> A man was put to death if he sinned with a woman "married to an husband," but if he committed the same sin with a bondmaid she was scourged and he must bring a trespass offering and the priest would pray for him. (Deut. 22: 22, 24, Lev. 20: 10, Lev. 19: 20-22.) This shows clearly that the sin was not supposed to be in the act of unchastity itself, so far as the man was concerned, but in the measure in which he infringed upon the rights of another man. A concrete working out of this absolute double standard of sex morals in patriarchal life is seen in the case of Judah. Seeing a woman by the roadside whom he took to be a harlot, he visited her. Some time afterward he was told that his widowed daughter-in-law was with child. He was responsible for the morals of his family and very promptly, "Judah said, Bring her forth and let her be burnt." When she proved to him that he was her child's father he did

<sup>16</sup> Patterson, *Hastings' Bible Dictionary*, Vol. III, pp. 265, 273.



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have the grace to say, "She hath been more righteous than I," but his only confessed fault was that he had not given her his younger son in marriage according to custom. (Gen. 38.)

This was the condition in Israel and it certainly was not better in other lands. Foley states that while at the time of Christ monogamy was the universal rule in the Græco-Roman-Jewish world for the securing of legitimate children, extra-matrimonial relations for men were regarded with absolute indifference by the Greeks and Romans.<sup>17</sup> Donaldson, thinking too dark a picture has been drawn of Roman life, says we must not confound Pagan with Christian notions of morality; that the Romans highly esteemed purity in a woman, but their notion of purity simply did not extend to the male citizens.<sup>18</sup> The Elder Cato declared that if a Roman found his wife in unchastity the law gave him power to put her to death on the spot; but that if she found him in the same case she could do nothing, and he complacently declared that this was right.

It was into a world like this that Jesus came. He held up his ideal of monogamous marriage indissoluble by divorce. And He laid heavily on the hearts of men a sense of the great wickedness of impurity in themselves personally, apart from the wrong done the woman's husband or the woman herself. (Mt. 5: 28.) His method of doing this will be dealt with in the closing chapter.

Foley sums up what the teaching and practice inaugurated by Jesus has done for marriage. (1) It has put mutual love of wife and husband in the foremost place. (2) The whole conception of the mar-

<sup>17</sup> *Hastings' Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. VIII, pp. 434-5.

<sup>18</sup> *Women in Ancient Greece and Rome*, p. 128.

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riage relation has been changed for the better by the high and honorable position accorded woman. (3) The union of the sexes has been purified and the happiness of the marriage relation secured by the absolute prohibition of every kind of extra-matrimonial connection. (4) It has emphatically condemned divorce as essentially sinful and inconsistent with the original institution of marriage.<sup>19</sup>

All this is implicit in the teaching of Jesus, and reveals His belief in the dignity and rights of women. Jesus demanded permanent monogamous marriage without extra-matrimonial alliances. In this demand He lifted sex-relationship to the plane of personality, for such marriage implies mental and spiritual fellowship between husband and wife. By this ennobling of relationships that involve women He proved His faith in their ability to live on the high level of personal fellowship.

<sup>19</sup> *Hastings' Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. VIII, p. 434.

## CHAPTER X

### HIS RELIGIOUS TEACHING THAT AFFECTED WOMAN

ALL the teaching of Jesus was in the deepest sense religious teaching. The last chapter dealt with His teachings on social religion as they affected woman. In this chapter His teachings on personal religion will be studied as they may have bearing on the position of woman.

Woman, having less of physical strength than man, and having her freedom of action hampered for long seasons through her child-bearing and child-care, is at a complete disadvantage in a world ruled by brute force. When physical prowess was the standard of excellence, woman was naturally rated as an inferior being and forced into subordination that was often practically slavery. In her work of child-care and serving the woman developed certain qualities commonly called feminine. Men thought these qualities very important in women, but disdained them for themselves. Jesus took these traits of character, esteemed only in an inferior class, and made them the crown of His nobility.

It is commonly said that Jesus combined the virtues of the masculine and feminine natures. F. W. Robertson declares, "Before Christ the qualities honored as divine were peculiarly the virtues of the man: Courage, Wisdom, Truth, Strength. But Christ proclaimed the divine nature of qualities entirely opposite: Meek-

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ness, Obedience, Affection, Purity. . . . Now observe these were all of the order of graces which are distinctively feminine.”<sup>1</sup> Geikie says of Jesus, “The feminine gentleness and purity, which are the ideal virtues of woman, were no less His characteristics.”<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps it would be more accurate to call these the human virtues, since they are the ones farthest removed from the brute. But all students of the life of Jesus are impressed by His possession of both types of virtue; it would seem to show the completeness of His humanity. Garvie states that in Jesus the strength of manhood was accompanied by the grace of womanhood and that He was “in His tenderness womanly.”<sup>3</sup>

### COMPASSION

What is the most important thing in the world, they asked Jesus. And without a moment for consideration He answered them. He did not say strength, power, wisdom, He did not even say justice. He said, Love. A thing that men were inclined to disclaim as too weak for their virility, a thing to enter into their lighter hours but not to mix with the serious affairs of war, statecraft, personal honor and fame, that thing Jesus put above every other thing, and extended its sway to the farthest bounds of life and to life's every relationship. (Mt. 22:35-40. Mk. 12:28-31. Lu. 10:25-27.) In His vivid picture of the great Judgment He made love in action the final test of human destiny. Not he who thought most clearly, nor he who fought most valiantly, but he who loved most aggressively would be summoned to His own right hand. (Mt.

<sup>1</sup> *Sermons*, Vol. II, pp. 270-274.

<sup>2</sup> *Life and Words*, Vol. I, p. 478.

<sup>3</sup> *Studies in the Inner Life of Jesus*, p. 297.

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25:31-46.) He told two parable stories that can never die. A father's renegade boy, broken and just come from a swine-yard—and from much worse—appears, journeying toward home, “And when he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and *had compassion* and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.” (Lu. 15:20.) That is Jesus' luminous, lovable, unforgettable picture of God. And when a caviling, self-justifying scribe asked him, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus told a story of a man robbed and wounded and left to die, and He told how, after immaculately religious folk had carefully passed by on the other side there came a man of alien speech and customs and religion who “when he saw him he *had compassion* on him” and spent time and money and personal service in restoring him. (Lu. 10:25-37.) This is Jesus' luminous, lovable, unforgettable picture of Man—the possible man.

The actual man was very far from this when Jesus came. There are many yet who think of tenderness as an attribute for weak women, not strong men. But Jesus embodied tenderness. His whole biography is a continued story of tenderness for the poor, the sick, the outcast, with an accompaniment of stern wrath toward those who, honored and comfortable, refused to manifest consideration for others. Again and again we read that He was “moved with compassion.” He literally suffered with all the suffering ones. He fed and healed and taught and comforted folk because He loved them. And when His career was almost finished and it was certain the Holy City would seal her own doom by casting Him out, He did not endure it with the stoical calm of a Greek or Roman philosopher or an Indian chieftain. For His was mother-grief. “O

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Jerusalem, Jerusalem," He cried, "how often would I have gathered thy children together *as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings*, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate." Stoical self-control may serve nicely in case of some thwarting of personal desire or satisfaction. But it has no anodyne for thwarted mother love, robbed of its right to bless its beloved, and that was what Jesus was suffering. (Mt. 23: 37, 38. Lu. 13: 34, 35.)

Luke tells us that He wept over Jerusalem (Lu. 19: 41), over the pitiful doom coming so soon upon her people. Men have been accustomed to think it unmanly to weep, and they dry up the springs of deep feeling rather than be betrayed into shedding tears. But the Man, facing the dreadful havoc of sin and misery, constrained by an intensity of love for those who suffered, was not ashamed to weep. So with another great man in history, the pain of a little child would make the tears to flow down the furrowed cheeks of Abraham Lincoln. Tears from a lack of self-control, the crossing of selfish desire, are reprehensible; but tears that flow from a great soul moved by compassion, such tears are close to the divine.

### MEEKNESS

Lecky says, "Another very important result of the new religion was to raise to far greater honor than they had previously possessed, the qualities in which women peculiarly excel."<sup>4</sup> There are few things that have seemed so ignoble to the natural man as meekness. While demanding it in women he despised it in men. And as a nourishing plant is sometimes closely re-

<sup>4</sup> *History of European Morals*, Vol. II, p. 358.



seemed by a poisonous growth, so there is a quality of cowardliness that sometimes passes as meekness. There was nothing of that about Jesus. He did not bluster in Galilee about the corruption in Jerusalem, He waited until He reached that city and then told the people in high places what He thought of their hypocrisies—a kind of courage not too frequently met in history.

But Jesus exalted meekness—the meek were to inherit the earth. When men reviled them they were not to hit back, they were to rejoice that they were receiving the treatment ever accorded the good and great. (Mt. 5: 5, 10-12, 39.) There was no place in His economy for that proud boastfulness that tells how it looks out for number one and how dangerous it is to all who attempt to cross its will. Very strange to such men would sound His teachings—unless they could find some way to make them mean something other than He said! For He said that big, strong, rugged men, men fit for fighting, were to hunt for Him in the outcast, the waif, the criminal, the incurable, those thrust out of sight lest society be disturbed by the sight of their misery; and He said that those who did not find Him in these destitute ones would be disowned at the great final reckoning. He also said that these strong capable men were to interrupt their own important business to care for people of alien race and language and creed, people whom they had never seen before; but He said a thing far harder than that, for He declared they were to hunt up ways of doing good to people they *had* seen and wished they hadn't, people who were ugly and mean and had treated them shamefully. And such contemptible folk were to be dragged into one's highest and most beautiful contemplations—were to be prayed for. (Mt. 5: 38-48.)

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No one but mothers were expected to love like that, and they only their own, and suddenly Jesus made it a rule for all men and women everywhere.

But He did not only teach this, He did it. When He was reviled He reviled not again, when He suffered He threatened not. (I Pet. 2: 23.) He who said to turn the other cheek could surely say, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." (Isa. 50: 6.) He who commanded His disciples always and everywhere to love their enemies, when in His own bitter agony on the cross pled with His Father to forgive the men who had done Him to death and gloated over His fearful pain.

When writing on the conduct of the disciples at the time of the betrayal and crucifixion we dissented from the usual blame cast on them. These men were not cowards. Peter was quick enough to step forward and attack the whole company with his one small sword, though he knew little enough how to use it, and the others would have followed His lead had Jesus permitted. Had Jesus died as men die, they would have died with Him. For men die fighting, with their backs to the wall; they sell their lives as dearly as they can. But how could men understand a death like His before Calvary was in the world's vocabulary? Only women could bear that, for that was woman's kind of courage. Women knew what it was "for the joy set before them to endure the pain, despising the shame," (Heb. 12: 2.) and therefore, while they might not comprehend as yet the inner meaning of the Golgotha scene, it did not baffle them as it did the men followers.

In lifting love in both its active and passive aspects

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above brute force as the standard of excellence, Jesus revealed two things in His attitude toward woman. One was a warm friendliness that desired to make the world a place where she might live safely and even happily. Who can estimate what it has already meant to woman that Jesus by His life and by His death has made the term Gentle Man the one of highest honor that can be applied to any man? And what will it not mean when all the implications of that term are recognized?

Also Jesus' exaltation of the qualities of affection, meekness, gentleness, would mean this to woman; by lifting a virtue commonly classed as feminine to a place of supreme worth for both men and women He would draw the possessors of that virtue up to a level of common humanity.

### PURITY

Exactly the same would be true in the case of the other "feminine" virtue that Geikie ascribes to Jesus, that of purity, when it was recognized as equally binding upon men and women. We do not say that Jesus was the first teacher to lift the standard of equal chastity for men and women, but He certainly seems to have been the first to make it sufficiently impressive to affect large numbers of men. And there was little conscience on the matter before His coming. "Confusing as are the implications of such a statement, the historical student must admit that the great . . . men of the Greek and Roman type . . . regarded what to-day would be considered licentiousness as morally neutral. That such a conception ever was outgrown must be laid largely to the credit of the Christian teaching we

are considering. Chastity of both men and women, not merely the maintenance of the marriage vow, was an ideal of all Christian teachers. The triumph of this ideal is a tribute to the wisdom of those called to confront a problem which at the outset must have seemed all but insoluble."<sup>5</sup> Of course these early teachers received this ideal directly from Jesus. And His wholesome teaching on the family would go far to make this high standard a possibility.

There is a unique element in Jesus' teaching here that made it necessary to defer this discussion until we reached the chapter dealing with personal religion. For Jesus does not treat of the "social evil" as primarily a social sin. He does not as in the Mosaic law protest that a man wrongs his neighbor when he is wanton with his neighbor's wife. He does not even make the higher plea for the woman who will suffer. (Although the phrase "against her" in Mark 10:11 shows unusual consideration for the woman.) But Jesus' social teaching in this case is intensely religious teaching. He builds it on the importance of the man's own soul:

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee pluck it out and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. [Mt. 5: 27-29.]

<sup>5</sup> Shailer Matthews, *The Messianic Hope in the New Testament*, pp. 291-2.

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The secret lustful look could not hurt the unconscious woman nor her owner. *But it would hurt the man's own soul*, cutting him off from God in Gehenna fire, and, in the vivid figure of the East, it were better for him to make himself blind than lose the inner vision possible only to the pure in heart.

Jesus gave no prudential purity advice; that had been given. But "He pursues adultery even into the recesses of the human heart, the human thought."<sup>6</sup>

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile the man. [Mk. 7: 20-23. Mt. 15: 18-20.] Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. [Mt. 5: 8.]

According to Jesus, in a sin of unchastity, not only had the man "humbled the woman," *but he had defiled himself*. Jesus did not put the emphasis on the wrong done to an inferior being, but on his making an inferior being of himself. It may be thought that an altruistic ideal would have been the higher appeal. But Jesus knew the human heart. He knew it was impossible to build a real altruism in this matter until it had been put for the man as for the woman on a solid basis of self-respect and religious conscience. When a man could be brought to feel that to indulge in illicit sex desire was a sin to lower his own self-respect and cut him off from communion with God, then there would be laid a foundation strong enough to bear the weighty edifice of masculine purity.

<sup>6</sup> Lange and Schaff, *John*, p. 167.



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In affecting the status and conduct of women as women and men as men there is nothing so powerful as sex-standards. Jesus put all life on a religious basis; to know God was its supreme object. But only the pure in heart could see God, and He expressly included sex-purity in His ideal of heart-purity. He made no distinctions of sex in His requirements; so far as we can ascertain He is the only great religious teacher of whom that can be said. In showing the superiority of Christ's ideal to that of the Jews, Plummer says, "Not only is social purity binding on both the married and the unmarried, whether male or female, but purity of heart is absolutely indispensable for admission to the Kingdom of Heaven."<sup>7</sup> Since in His Kingdom men and women were held to exactly the same sex-standards, in proportion as His Kingdom spread and its requirements were understood, a single standard of sex-morality would obtain.

And this equality of men and women in sex-standards would work toward general equality. The same would be true of His religious teachings that omitted all reference to "women, children and slaves." Equality in the supreme thing of religion would work toward equality in less important matters.

### SERVICE AND HUMILITY

There is another phase of the teaching of Jesus that is of the highest social and religious import and of the greatest significance in a consideration of His attitude toward woman. We refer to His remarkable views on service and humility.

<sup>7</sup> *Matthew*, p. 81.



At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. [Mt. 18:13.]

By the way they had disputed among themselves who should be the greatest. And He called the twelve and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be the last of all and the servant of all. And He took a child and set him in the midst of them. . . . [Mk. 9:34-36.]

And He put forth a parable to those who were bidden to the feast when He saw how they chose out the chief rooms. . . . For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. [Lu. 14:7, 11. Mt. 23:11, 12.]

John and James, with their mother, came asking for the best places in the new kingdom they expected Him to establish at Jerusalem; the ten were indignant when they heard of it:

But Jesus called them unto Him and said: Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and their great ones exercise authority upon them and are called benefactors. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him

be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many.

For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as He that serveth. [Matt. 20: 21-28. Mk. 10: 35-45. Lu. 22: 24-27.]

Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogue and the chief rooms at feasts. [Lu. 20: 46.]

In all historic times it has been taken for granted that the superior should be served by the inferior, that the strong should force the weak to toil for them, to do for them the dirty, disagreeable tasks of life. And we have seen that where brute force was regarded as the standard of excellence, woman must of necessity be regarded as an inferior. Being so regarded, she was forced into practical slavery, indeed it is thought that women were the first slaves. A study of primitive conditions shows men hunting, fishing and fighting, while women initiate and develop the first agriculture and manufacturing.<sup>8</sup> Men killed, but the nasty work of skinning and cleaning the kill, and even the heavy work of lugging it home, was left for the women.

When war had abated a little, and men took over and developed further those industries that women had begun, they still required all personal service to be rendered by women. From infancy to old age men were fed and tended, their dishes and house and clothing kept clean and straight for them by women. When Demosthenes said the Greeks had the *hetæræ* for their

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix F.

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pleasure, concubines for attendance on their persons and wives to bear them legal children and supervise their households, he simply expressed the everywhere prevalent idea that women were created to minister to the pleasure, the comfort and the honor of men.

And as woman was counted an inferior, this work that she did was looked upon as beneath the dignity of any man unless he be a slave. All who could climbed to the top and got as many people as they could to wait on them. Of course there came a time when slaves were secured also for the women of the leisure class. But many if not all peoples have known the state that prevails in Africa to-day, where a man's wealth consists chiefly of the number of wives he has to work for him. There the women still carry on the agriculture and kindred pursuits.

Into a world where personal service, all the most menial tasks, were performed by women and slaves, Jesus came. And He declared that true greatness did not consist in bullying weaker folk into serving you, it consisted in using your greater strength to serve them; that not the man who climbed to some high eminence and had many others to wait on him, but the man who sought a lowly place where he might serve others was the God-like man. But He saw that they had no comprehension of how He had humbled Himself to walk among them and that His words passed over their heads. Perhaps an object-lesson would penetrate their density:

He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments and took a towel and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with

the towel wherewith He was girded. Then cometh He to Simon Peter and Peter saith unto Him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter said unto Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me. . . . So after He had washed their feet and had taken His garments, and was set down again He said unto them: Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord, neither is he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things happy are ye if ye do them. [Jno. 13:4-17.]

There are few things that men would consider more distasteful than the washing of other people's dirty feet; women and slaves, such menial tasks were fit only for them. It is no wonder that Peter, the first to find voice in such an embarrassing situation, cried out in aversion, "No, Master, you shall never wash my feet." So ignominious a task was beneath the dignity of any man, certainly of a Master of men. But He silenced their objections and finished His self-imposed task. Then, laying aside the soiled towel, He looked deep into the eyes of those men whose petty pride and wrangling for position had pierced His heart so short a time before.

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"You want to be masters of men," He said.<sup>9</sup> "You have asked for high and important positions in the new kingdom. Very well, observe what I have just done and learn the law of greatness in my kingdom. Understand that its great men do not sit upon thrones, either temporal or ecclesiastical, they are not surrounded by a throng of attendants to fetch and carry for them, they do not have special robes and seats and titles to reveal to the world how great they are. The masters in my kingdom go out through slums and gutters and prisons hunting for those whom the world counts inferior. With their own two hands they cut off the rags and wash away the grime and stench and corruption of poverty and disease. Their own clothes are often shabby, their friends the common class, no menial task is below their dignity. And the world seats them last, but in my kingdom they hold first place." (Mt. 19:30, 20:16. Mk. 10:31. Lu. 13:30.)

It is not to be supposed that teaching so repellent to the instincts of the natural man would be very willingly learned, and indeed it has been very imperfectly learned by people calling themselves Christian. But multitudes have literally accepted it through the centuries, and the leaven of it is rather remarkably spreading in this twentieth century. The word service is now on many unaccustomed lips, the thought of it is entering many unaccustomed places, business is retreating from its emphasis wholly upon profit and saying much of service. And if there is some hypocrisy and little enough of humility with all this as yet, still the signs are very hopeful and many hearts are

<sup>9</sup> Here several of His teachings on this line are combined. We do not know just how much He may have said that last night.

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sincere. Slowly, laboriously and painfully but still really the question is changing from "Who will serve us?" to "Whom can we serve?"

All democracy is implicit in the words of Jesus. In the early Christian Church rich and poor, slave and free, male and female, met on a basis of religious equality, ignoring social distinction. Absorbed in eternal things, temporal differences seemed matters of slight importance. But the so-called Christian world has been slow to see that this spiritual equality should find some proper expression in temporal matters. However, the leaven of "neither Greek nor Jew, neither Barbarian nor Scythian, neither male nor female, neither bond nor free" (Col. 3: 11, Gal. 3: 28) is still working. The divine right of one group of men to hold another group in slavery has been done away, the divine right of kings, one hereditary group to rule over other groups of men, is passing, the divine right of sex, one sex to rule over the other sex, is certain to pass from the whole earth in the measure that Jesus' words on service and humility are understood and taken seriously. It is safe to say that those who have caught the vision of Jesus' teaching will not rest until all human beings of both sexes have, not a dead level of possessions and occupations, but that genuine democracy that gives full opportunity for complete development and expression of personality.



## A SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

OUR thesis is that while the historic attitude toward woman has been that she is the creature of her sex-relationships and blood-relationships, the attitude of Jesus toward her was that she was a person with relationships. We have endeavored to show:

That in His dealings with women Jesus recognized in them high intellectual and spiritual capacity;

That He defended against criticism the women who reached out for these privileges that He set before them;

That He demanded of women, even as He did of men, that they choose the interests of the Kingdom of God before those of their human relationships, that He considered women capable of making such momentous choices, and that He reproved them when they failed to do so;

That He treated women who had sinned against the law of chastity as He did other sinners, that is as capable of repentance and restoration;

That His belief in women as the equals of men led to a fine courtesy and consideration that is not shown toward inferiors;

That He accepted women as ministers to His own personal needs, and took them into the inner circle of His disciples and friends who accompanied Him on His preaching journeys;

That He climaxed His amazing treatment of women by appearing to them first after His resurrection and, as a woman had been the first evangelist announcing

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to men His Messiahship, so He made women the first messengers of His completed Messiahship, announcing to men His resurrection;

That by His dealings with women guilty of unchastity, by His teachings on marriage, divorce and social sins, He lifted an exactly equal standard of sex-morality for men and women. In doing this He exalted all of life's relationships to the plane of personality and thereby made possible an immeasurably larger and happier life for both men and women;

That by His teachings on personal religion He made affection, gentleness, purity, the supreme virtues for all humanity regardless of sex, thus bringing a new respect for women, as these had been regarded as peculiarly feminine virtues, and also making the world an easier place for her to live in as these traits would come to prevail; And that, by His teaching that true greatness consisted in service and humility, He likewise exalted qualities that had been assigned particularly to woman, and placed at the foundation of social institutions a train of dynamite that must disrupt and destroy all autocracy, including that of sex, in the measure that His Kingdom would come to rule in human life.

It was a matter of profound significance for the future of the race that Jesus should recognize woman's mental equality with man, her power to grasp wisdom and truth. It meant that as His views came to prevail woman's mind would be disciplined and she would be made far more efficient and desirable in her relationships as wife and mother. It was likewise a matter of great significance that Jesus recognized man's moral capacity for gentleness and purity. It meant that as His viewpoint came to be understood the old

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stigma of "feminine" would be removed from these virtues and they would be seen to belong to the highest human development. This would make man far more efficient and desirable as husband and father. So that the attitude of Jesus toward women as persons, which begins by emancipating them from being creatures of their relationships, goes on to give men a new conscience on their relationships with beings no longer thought of as inferior to themselves, and ends by ennobling and exalting these relationships for both men and women by introducing into them the highest mental and spiritual fellowship.

It is a cause for great gratitude on the part of all friendly minded folk that to-day, all over the earth, there is a quickening interest in the teachings of Jesus. If some races, and some groups devoted to certain movements, are finding new meanings in the life and words of Jesus that seem disturbing to established traditions, that can cause dismay only to those who care more for settled interpretations than they do for the Christ Himself or for His truth. Unfortunate indeed is it that the organized Church has so often refused to recognize the implications of the Gospel it preached, and has tried to quench rather than to utilize the dynamic of Jesus' teaching. This has been particularly true in all matters of democracy. The words of Paul were spoken, as we noted in the beginning, to keep the dynamic of the new life from literally blowing to pieces the unjust social adjustments before there was a group large and strong enough to reorganize life on a more liberal basis. But those who feared the democracy of Jesus for selfish reasons, and those who honestly believed it dangerous, took Paul's words and for centuries made them a stumbling block to genuine progress.

The result was that the effort to do away with the despotism of kings, with human slavery, and with woman's subserviency to man, all were met with proof-texts from the writings of the great apostle. It is little wonder that some, burning with a passion for justice on these lines (a passion unkindled where the words of Jesus were unknown), turned from the Church and all it taught, not knowing whence their inspiration came.

And this too is cause for thanksgiving: there is a disposition on the part of many leaders of the Christian Church to-day to realize the fatal blunders of the past and to try to avoid them in the future; to go deep into the meaning of all the Christian Scriptures rather than take the surface meaning of various sayings in unrelated fashion. If this spirit can prevail it will win and hold to the Church many men and women whose passion for humanity has really come from the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## APPENDIX

### A

IT is not so hard to think of Arabs and other races as engaging in capturing and bartering women for marriage. But it is a little hard for the white race to realize it was in the same business not so long ago. S. Baring Gould says: "Originally marriage among the Germans was simply the purchase of the woman. A woman was always under ward; the natural holder of the wardship was the father; at marriage he made over the wardship to the husband. . . . Whoever has attended a village wedding in the Black Forest and has seen the bride chased by the bridegroom, and knows anything of early civilization, discerns a relic of the bride capture of primitive times." (Quoted from *Germany Past and Present*, p. 98.)

Edward Westermarck is certainly not prejudiced in favor of Christianity, but he states that "among the Germans marriage by purchase was abolished only after their conversion to Christianity." *Development of the Moral Ideas*, Vol. II, p. 384. The English and American peoples are descendants of these Northern Europeans.

### B

One of the most degrading things of the non-Christian cults has been this practice of devoting women to the gods to be used for prostitution. The Jehovah worship of Israel had a long battle with the immorality

of the worship of the surrounding peoples. The Hierodouloi, "Slaves of the god," were both men and women devoted to the work of religion. As these religions almost universally included sexual rites, the women sank into prostitution. It may be this tendency that eliminated women from the Hebrew priesthood when the endeavor was made to establish an ethical religion.

This practice has been very widespread in ancient religions, clear reference being found to it in the Code of Hammurabi. Babylon, Egypt, Greece, these and other countries had a class of debased women to serve a debased religion. It is still a vital factor of Hinduism. The god Vishnu, in his incarnation as Krishna, for instance, is described as delighting himself with thousands of women devoted to the god. The Nautch, or dancing-girls, are always thus degraded, yet they are a necessity at marriages and other festivals. The men who journey as pilgrims, the Indian boys, all classes in fact, are corrupted by these women who are themselves the helpless victims of the demands of religion. In 1892 an Anti-Nautch Society was organized by educated Hindus.

## C

The *Koran*, Chap. LV, describes Paradise. Here is part of it: "Therein shall receive them beauteous damsels, refraining their eyes from beholding any besides their spouses, Whom no man shall have deflowered before them, neither any genius. Having complexions like pearls and rubies. Which therefore of your Lord's benefits will ye ungratefully deny. . . . Other gardens . . . there shall be therein agreeable and beauteous damsels; which therefore of your Lord's bene-



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fits will ye ungratefully deny. Having black eyes and kept in pavilions from public view. Whom no man shall have deflowered before their destined spouses. Therein shall they delight themselves. . . .”

Nothing similar seems to be provided for the wives and concubines left behind. It is hard to elevate man or woman with a religion like this.

### D

In ancient times science had not discovered the ovum of the woman. The seed was supposed to be entirely of the male. In the *Furies* Apollo is made to say:

“This too I answer, mark a steadfast word.  
Not the true parent is the mother’s womb  
That bears the child; she doth but nurse the seed,  
New-sown; the male is parent; she for him  
As stranger for a stranger hoards the germ.”

This in Greece. The religious laws of India make the same idea clear. *Manu* IX: 32-35: “They all say that the male issue of a woman belongs to the lord, but with respect to the meaning of the term lord, the revealed texts differ; some call the begetter of the child the lord, others declare that it is the owner of the soil. By the sacred traditions the woman is declared to be the soil, the man is declared to be the seed. . . . Never therefore must a prudent well-trained man who knows the Vedas cohabit with another man’s wife. As with cows, mares, female camels, slave girls, buffalo cows, she-goats and ewes it is not the begetter (or his owner) that gets the offspring, even thus it is with the wife of others. . . . Thus men who have no marital property in women but sow their seed in the soil of others, benefit the owner of the woman, but the

giver of the seed reaps no advantage. Know that such is the law concerning cows, mares, slave girls, etc." The "owner of the soil" is never the woman herself.

The *Koran*, Chap. II: 220, has the same idea. "Your wives are your tillage; go in therefore unto your tillage in what manner soever ye will. . . ." Lecky in his *History of European Morals* (Vol. II, p. 280) says of the Greeks. "The inferiority of women to men was strongly asserted and it was illustrated and defended by a curious physiological notion, that the generative power belonged exclusively to men, women having only a subordinate part in the production of their children." Probably all nations held this idea; the Hebrew writings refer often to the seed of the various patriarchs. There is one striking statement that stands out in a new light when this general belief is understood. It is (Gen. 3: 15.), "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel." This is perhaps the only reference to "woman's seed" in ancient literature.

## E

In the March number of *The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Review*, 1827, the following is given as contemporary news:

"A most interesting meeting has been lately held in York, for the purpose of petitioning the Legislature to abolish, in British dominion in India, the horrid practice of burning widows on the funeral pile of their husbands. The Recorder, and several Clergymen and Gentlemen of the highest respectability, gave their warmest support to the object of the meeting. . . .

(The petition in part reads:)

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"To the Honorable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament assembled, the Humble Petition of the inhabitants of the city of York and its Vicinity SHEWETH

"That your Petitioners contemplate with extreme regret the practice existing in British India of burning widows on the funeral piles of their husbands, inasmuch as it is a gross violation of the law of God and the feeling of humanity and its tendency highly demoralizing.

"(Statement that official returns showed that in the province of Bengal alone from 1819 to 1823 inclusive "upwards of three thousand" widows had been burned.)

"That your Petitioners recur with much satisfaction to the resolution which the Honorable the House of Commons was pleased to pass in 1793, viz.: 'That it is part of the peculiar and bounden duty of the British Legislature to promote by all just and prudent means the interest and happiness of the inhabitants of the British dominion in India, and that for these ends such measures ought to be adopted as may gradually tend to their advancement in useful knowledge, and to their religious and moral improvement.'

"That your Petitioners, whilst they gratefully acknowledge the steps that have already been taken for the moral and religious improvement of the great population of India, earnestly implore your honorable House to adopt such measures in the spirit of the above Resolution, as it may in its wisdom deem most expedient for abrogating a practice so highly injurious to that character of humanity and veneration for divine law, which we trust will ever distinguish the government and people of this happy country."

A similar petition was sent to the House of Lords.

Here a Christian group was begging, in the name of religion, for the doing away with that which the Hindu people practiced in the name of their religion.

Pundita Ramabai wrote of this custom: "Throughout India widowhood is regarded as the punishment for a horrible crime or crimes committed by a woman in her former existence upon earth. Disobedience and disloyalty to the husband, or murdering him in an earlier existence are the chief crimes punished in the present birth by widowhood. If the widow be mother of a son she is not usually such a pitiable object; although she is certainly looked upon as a sinner, social abuse is . . . greatly diminished . . . for she is mother of a superior being." *The High Caste Hindu Woman*, p. 69. She also says that, "In Western and Southern India when a girl or woman salutes the elders and priests they bless her with these words: 'Mayst thou have eight sons and may thy husband survive thee.'"

But India is by no means the only land where widows were expected to refuse to live when their husbands died. Edward Alsworth Ross in *The Changing Chinese* (p. 201) says, "It is not yet two centuries since it was decreed that no official honors were to be conferred upon widows who slew themselves." The *Li Ki* (Bk. IX, Sect. 3: 7) "Faithfulness is requisite in all, and faithfulness is [specially] the virtue of the wife. Once mated with her husband, all her life she will not change [her feeling of duty to him] and hence, when her husband dies she will not marry again."

But let not the descendants of Northern European peoples arrogate superior virtue to themselves; before the Christian era they were not greatly different. Tacitus, writing with great admiration of the Germanic

tribes says: "Still more exemplary is the practice of those states in which none but virgins marry. . . . Thus they take one husband as one body and one life; that no thought, no desire, may extend beyond him; and he may be loved not only as their husband but as their marriage." A note says, "Among the Herculi the wife was expected to hang herself at once on the grave of her husband if she would not live in perpetual infamy." "A Treatise on the Situation, Manners and Inhabitants of Germany," c 19.

Of course it never remotely entered the minds of the men that they were to remain unmarried if the wife died. They commonly married again while she lived, or at least took concubines. Capture and purchase of women, and the consequent regarding of them as the property of the husband accounts for most of these conditions, all a result of the rule of physical force.

## F

*The New International Encyclopedia* (Vol. XXIII, p. 760) has a long article on "Woman the Mother of Industry" by George Elliott Howard. It says: "While primitive man was hunting and fighting, primitive woman was creating and practicing the arts of peace. Indeed the habit of work—of labor as a conscious and persistent employment of effort for the attainment of some end—was primarily woman's contribution. Mankind had to be trained to labor, and woman was the original learner and teacher . . . When slavery arose as an economic institution women were the favorite, though by no means the exclusive, objects of exploitation. Often the wife was the chattel slave of her husband . . . Woman was the chief inventor of the



original type of useful arts. . . . Most important of all, woman was, par excellence, the social creator. The mother more than the father was the builder of the first types of family constitution."

The industrial efficiency of women made men desire more wives, and tended to make polygamy denote wealth and honor on the part of the man who numbered many wives. Westermarck says: "With the development of the instinct of property wives came to be regarded as valuable assets, since they carry on crude agricultural work and perform all the productive household labor. . . . If his possessions are few, monogamy is a necessity: if he has wealth in lands and cattle, he is able to purchase numerous wives who furnish him with useful offspring and add to his possessions. (*History of Human Marriage* Vol. III, p. 13.) He tells that "A Shortland chief declared that his main objection to the coming of the Christian missionaries was that they would insist on his giving up nearly all of his wives, thereby depriving him of those by whose labor his plantations were cultivated, and his household supplied with food. . . ." And he gives a quotation, saying: "The more wives an East Central African has the richer he is. It is wives that maintain him. They do all his plowing, milling, cooking. They may be viewed as superior servants who combine all the capacities of male servants and female servants in Britain, who do all his work and ask no wages." (Vol. III, p. 81.)

Those interested in this subject should read Oliver T. Mason's, *The Share of Woman in Primitive Culture*.





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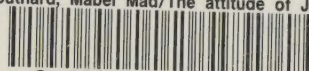
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